This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

600056136R

ORLETON MANOR.

THE MYSTERY

OF

ORLETON MANOR.

BY

ROBERT JEWELL.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:

JAMES BLACKWOOD & CO., LOVELL'S COURT,

PATERNOSTER ROW.

1876.

All rights reserved.

251. d. 384.

ORLETON MANOR.

CHAPTER I.

Mr. Maggs plodded along the slushy streets, carrying the orphan child in his arms. His religion was a very simple one. He never bothered himself with deep speculative theories as to the future state, but simply placed implicit reliance on the Promises. I have no doubt but that many strict moralists and sectarians will be of opinion that Mr. Maggs was not one of the elect. He did not go to church, and attended no place of worship whatever except on Sundays. He was never known to take the Sacrament, because, he would observe, he was not good enough. Moreover, he was much given to hilarity, and was of a lightness of heart which, with many of the more eminently pious, is regarded as quite incompatible with holiness. Occasionally, as the reader is aware, Mr. Maggs swore. This in itself, I believe, is not regarded in so severe a light by those stern purists with whom the signs of a regenerate nature are a stern, sour, and forbidding aspect,

and a condemnation of all innocent pleasures; for they themselves not unfrequently call their Maker to witness the most trivial occurences, and in their more fervid moments have been heard to hold forth in language which the unregenerate would call rank blasphemy. Had you asked him his peculiar views of religion, he would have been considerably puzzled to answer you; but if you should watch his life, you would see that he believed in self-sacrifice and the alleviation of distress, which are good works; and that every such action brought a blessing with it, which was faith.

So when Mr. Maggs carried the child home, with the remark that "he would be blowed but he'd stand by her," he was convinced that in so doing he would be making an offering which would be better received than the sacrifice of sheep, or oxen, or he-goats, or she-goats. What a pleasant world this would be, and what bitterness of spirit, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness would be done away with, if we could all reduce our religion to the same simple formula!

So little Polly was carried away from the house of mourning to Hulme Terrace. To say that Mrs. Maggs was surprised would be to tell an untruth; she would not have been surprised if "her Samwel" brought home a whole infant school. She was by this time used to his charitable practices; and, if the truth must be told, she even aided and abetted him in those practices.

"Mother," said Mr. Maggs to his wife, when he reached home, "I've brought a little 'un, as may be a daughter to both on us."

"Why, Samwel," replied Mrs. Maggs, "wherever did you find her?"

"In St. Stephen Street," Mr. Maggs said, in a whisper. "She is a orphan. Her par died this morning, leaving her a few waluables, tied up in a pocket-handkercher, and six dooplicates, which can be redeemed any Saturday night for a wery small trifle."

Mrs. Maggs drew back the shawl from the child's face, as it rested on her husband's shoulder, on which she had cried herself to sleep. "She's a purty dear," she said, in a low voice.

"Aren't she?" replied Mr. Maggs. "A out-and-outer. She is wery pretty."

"Who was her poor par?" whispered Mrs. Maggs.

"He was a gentleman as was a friend of that gentleman as Tom got out o' the river," her husband replied. "A wery nice man, I should say, but uncommon low in the water." And he solemnly shook his head, and pursed up his mouth in a manner that was far more expressive than any words could have been.

Just then the child awoke with a start, and seeing strange faces bending over her, she began to weep bitterly. "Take me to my father! Oh, where is father?" she said, piteously.

Mr. Maggs blew his nose, and remarked that he should have to invest a considerable amount of capital in the purchase of spectacles, his eyesight was getting so bad; and his wife seemed to be labouring under the same inconvenience, for she suddenly became busily employed in wiping *her* eyes. "Give her to

600056136R

ORLETON MANOR.

THE MYSTERY

OF

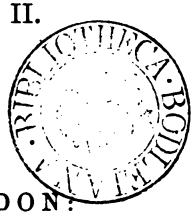
ORLETON MANOR.

BY

ROBERT JEWELL.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.



LONDON:

JAMES BLACKWOOD & CO., LOVELL'S COURT,

PATERNOSTER ROW.

1876.

All rights reserved.

251. d. 584.

Mr. Maggs saw the look of amusement which passed between the lads, and immediately began to laugh, saying, "Sam, that's one to you, ole chap. Your father was stoopid that time. My tongue wags wery fast sometimes, I do allow."

"After you've drunk your own and your son's share of the beer, for instance," said Sam.

"Don't insinivate, Sam," Mr. Maggs replied. "It isn't dootiful. You be good boys, and I'll treat you all to the theatre to-night, praps, an' stand stout and oysters arter. There now!"

"Bravo, Mr. Maggs!" said Tom. "Now tell us how you'll manage about the little girl."

"Well," replied Mr. Maggs, "I shall put the question, 'What are you agoin' to do about the orpharn?' He'll say 'I'll take to her.' I'll say, 'Are you a married man?' He'll say, 'No!' I'll say, 'I am!' He'll wery possibly say, 'Many 'appy returns of the day!' Then I'll say, 'Leave her with my missus.'"

"Perhaps he won't say anything of the kind," Tom remarked.

"Oh, he will!" Mr. Maggs said, confidently. "I'm sure on it. You couldn't see much of him down under that arch, Tom, and Sam hadn't much time to study his features while a-tickling his feet. Now I saw him in bed a-drinking brandy-and-water, and a wery nice little gentleman he was. Oh, I'm sartain he's a good 'un! I never see many such stout, red-necked little fellers as wasn't good 'uns at a pinch. He's wery good-natured, I'm sure, for he's got a deal of timber under his weskit."

"Is corpulence an invariable sign of good-nature?" Tom inquired.

"Not inwariable," Mr. Maggs replied. "There's different kinds of corpilences, Tom. There's corpilence as comes of stuffin' and guzzlin'; I don't count that any good. The corpilence I like is the corpilence that comes of a good 'art; and them corpilences, Tom, *will* come, whether you eat much or little. And now it's time for me to be off. I promised to see that little gentleman again to-day. You'd better come too, Tom."

"No!" Tom said. "I think I'd better stop at home. He'll think I'm in a hurry to be thanked."

"Not a bit of it!" Mr. Maggs affirmed. "I think it's your dooty to go and ask arter him."

"There will be no necessity for that," said Tom. "You can ask him how he is, and tell us when you return."

"Well, there's truth in that!" Mr. Maggs replied. "I'll give him your love."

The two lads began to laugh. "That will be coming it rather strong, won't it?" Sam said. "Rather too affectionate, considering that Tom doesn't know him."

"What shall it be, then, Tom?" Mr. Maggs inquired. "I must say somethin' from you."

"Give him my respects, and say I hope he isn't hurt much," Tom laughed.

"Respects is wery perlite, but hardly warm enough under the circumstances!" Mr. Maggs said. "Better say love, Tom!"

"Better not," Tom answered.

Mr. Maggs was perplexed. "What do you think, Sam? You're a genus, you know, and ought to be up to all them affairs, or what's the use of bein' a genus?" he said, turning to his son.

"Split the difference," Sam replied. "Say kind regards."

"Wery good, Sam. Wery good, indeed. Is it kind regards, Tom?" Mr. Maggs inquired.

"If you like," Tom replied.

"Then I do like!" Mr. Maggs said. "And now I must be off. Look arter the little 'un, mother, and tell her she'd better have another bustin' good cry, and get it all over. I'll be back in time for us all to start to the theatre."

In a short time Mr. Maggs was in Brazennose Street, and found Mr. Seedly, with the exception of a cut on his head, not much the worse for his adventure of the previous night. He appeared very much pleased to see Mr. Maggs, and eagerly inquired after the late critic to the *Slasher*.

"I hope you found him better," he said.

Mr. Maggs looked at the little man, and gravely shook his head. "Isn't the doctor come back?" he asked.

"No. He isn't worse I hope, is he?" said the little man, anxiously.

"All flesh is grass," murmured Mr. Maggs. "It looks wery green in the mornin', but by dinner-time is cut down."

Mr. Seedly began to pace the room impatiently. He put his hands into his pockets, and then withdrew them repeatedly, and in the most nervous manner.

"Mr. Maggs," he said, stopping in front of that gentleman, "speak out plainly. Is he——"

"He is, I'm wery sorry to say," Mr. Maggs replied.

Mr. Seedly sank into a chair, and covered his face with his hands. He remained in that position for some time, and when he withdrew them his face was wet.

"At what time?" he asked.

"Eight o'clock," Mr. Maggs replied. "Just when the clock o' the Old Bailey struck."

Again the little man appeared overcome with emotion. The tears ran down his cheeks like rain as he sobbed, "Poor Joe! poor Joe! the truest heart in all Manchester. They are all dropping off. Only two of us left."

Mr. Maggs was sorry for the little man. He participated in his grief, and thought he would like to comfort him. So he brought his chair close to Mr. Seedly's, and placing his hand on the little man's, he rubbed it gravely, and said, "Cheer up, sir. Aren't we brothers all? Hearty an' kindly does it, an' hearty an' kindly it is."

"He was so young," sobbed the little man. "Not older than I am. Quite in his prime, in fact."

"A matter of ten or a dozen year don't count for much, I'm thinkin'," Mr. Maggs replied. "We must all knock under some day or other, an' a wery good thing if that 'ere day should find us with a portmanty o' repentance in one hand, an' another big 'un full o' faith in His marcy in the other, all ready to start on a wery uncertain journey."

"True! true!" said the little man. "What you say is very true, Mr. Maggs; but it's uncommonly hard to think about when you are tolerably healthy and comfortably off like I am. Then it was so hard for him to have died in such low water."

"I dunno about that," Mr. Maggs replied. "I'll take my davy of this, though—it's uncommon hard to *live* in such low water. He seemed in wery good spirits when he went, particler arter I told him to put Polly in the will."

"What will, and who is Polly?" Mr. Seedly inquired.

"His will. I wrote it out all myself, excep' his name at the bottom," Mr. Maggs replied.

"I didn't know he had anything to leave," said Mr. Seedly.

"Well, there wasn't much," Mr. Maggs replied. "There was a few waluables, incloodin' a picter of his old woman when she was a sweet purty young lass, and some dooplicates, which I'll wenture to redeem as soon as I can make my way up Shudehill."

"Where are these things?" asked Mr. Seedly.

"I've brought 'em in my pocket-'ankercher, and the will along with 'em," Mr. Maggs replied. "Here they are, an' you'll see it's all straight."

Mr. Seedly read the will, and examined the effects of his deceased friend, which was easily done. "I had forgotten all about the child," he said. "Where is she? Has she remained behind in that miserable place?"

"Well, no," Mr. Maggs replied. "I took the liberty o' packing her up in a shawl, and carryin' of her off to Hulme Terrace; and at this wery

minute, I spec, she's in our front bedroom along o' my old woman. I couldn't go and leave her there along of her dead par, you know; and though he wouldn't leave her to me in the will—and wery stoopid of him I call it—I jest took her 'ome."

"By Jove! Maggs, you're a good fellow," said the little man, grasping Mr. Maggs's hand excitedly.

"Oh, it's nothin'," Mr. Maggs replied. "I'd like to keep her altogether, if you don't mind. In course," he continued, with a wave of his hand, "you 'ave the fust claim, as I told our old woman to-day, by the right o' friendship. You succeed to her jest as you would to a thousand pound or so. But what I was a-goin' to observe is, that I know a man as 'ud be glad if you'd give up that claim o' yours; a man as 'ud be a father to her, and whose missus 'ud be a mother to her. And that man is *me*, and that missus is *my* missus."

"No, no!" said the little man. "Her father was one of my oldest and dearest friends, and the charge of bringing up the child must be mine."

Mr. Maggs smoothed his hat with his cuff, and then placed his hand before his mouth and coughed.

"'Scuse me, sir," he said, "are you a married man, or are you not?"

"I am not," the little man replied. "Sometimes I think more's the pity."

"Opinions wary, sir," Mr. Maggs said, with an air that intimated that though he personally had been blessed in the conjugal state, yet there was a good deal to be said for and against that state

"To resoom," he continued. "If you aren't a married man, are you a bachelor?"

"I am," the little man replied, in the gravest manner possible.

"Wery well, then," Mr. Maggs said; "is it the correc' thing for a unmarried man as is a bachelor to have the care of a young girl as 'll one day be wery bootiful. Now, sir," he continued, with the manner of one who had his opponent in a corner from which it was impossible for him to escape, "Is it the cheese?"

Mr. Seedly pondered long and deeply. The arguments used by Mr. Maggs he saw were sound. It was not "the correct thing," neither was it "the cheese," for an unmarried man to undertake the sole charge of a young girl who gave promise of considerable beauty. That was plain enough. But then how should he best discharge his trust—for as a trust he regarded the child, he having arrived at that conclusion in pretty much the same way as Mr. Maggs. At length he said, "Now, Mr. Maggs, what you say carries great weight with me."

"Brayvo!" exclaimed Mr. Maggs, seeing that the little man stopped. "Wery good, indeed. Go on, matie—sir, I mean."

"Let it be matie," the little man said, smiling. "Now, what can be done with the child unless I take her home with me?"

"Let her stop with the party as I mentioned afore, which is me and my missus," Mr. Maggs replied.

"That would be shifting a charge from me, on whom she has every claim, to you, on whom she has none," said the little man.

"Orpharns, matie—sir, I mean—has every claim

on me," Mr. Maggs replied. "I was a orpharn myself when I was a wery little 'un, and the consekens is, orpharns are naturally related to me."

"I hardly know what to do," the little man, who was in the utmost perplexity, remarked.

Mr. Maggs, to judge by the thoughtful expression of his face, was also perplexed. He polished his hat, and rubbed the back of his head, probably to assist him in solving the problem how to dispose of the orphan so as to be agreeable to all parties. At length a light beamed from his eye, and a smile spread over his face, as he brought his hand down on his knee with a loud smack. "I've got it!" he said, triumphantly. "Listen, matie—sir."

"Matie," the little man replied, using the word with emphasis, for it tickled his fancy prodigiously, "I am listening."

"We'll make a company on it," said Mr. Maggs.

"How?" inquired the little man.

"She shall stop at our house for the present, with my missus," said Mr. Maggs.

"Well, what then?" inquired the little man.

"You shall stand her in gowns, and bonnets, and them things. Her keep won't be much," said Mr. Maggs.

"But to keep her in clothes will be nothing," the little man replied.

Mr. Maggs looked at Mr. Seedly with something like astonishment on his face, which, however, softened into a pitying smile, as he closed one eye, and fixing the other on the little man, said, "Matie, you are a unmarried man an' a bachelor, and, in course, you can't know better. Jest you go and get

a wife, and maybe a daughter or two, and you'll alter that 'ere opinion."

"I've heard of that before, from some of my married friends," the little man replied. "And perhaps you're right. However, she'll have to go to school some day, and I'll stand to that matter."

"Right, matie. I give in there," said Mr. Maggs, beaming.

"And I daresay she'll be getting married some day or other," the little man continued, with a thoughtful look, as though he were trying to have a peep into the future. "I'll come down with something very handsome then."

"Right again, matie!" roared Mr. Maggs. "We'll have a reg'lar buster then, an' all be off to Belle Vue arterwards, and I'll stand the expenses o' that. There's no place like Belle Vue for a-windin' up a weddin'."

"Then, Mr. Maggs, give me your hand," said the little man. "Is it all settled?"

"There is my 'and, and settled it is," replied Mr. Maggs, seizing the little man's hand. "A good squeege, matie! and now another! for our 'arts 'ave met on the common ground of humanity an' love."

"Bless you, Maggs," said the little man, laughing and crying at one and the same time. "Now how is it you wish so much to have the child with you?"

Mr. Maggs slowly opened the door of the room in which they were sitting, and looked into the lobby. He then closed it, and kneeling down on the inside, placed his ear to the keyhole. After a few moments

he quietly arose, and suddenly opened the door. "Ah!" he said, turning to the little man, "servants is beggars to listen. If anyone had been outside, though, I would have had him. You see, sir, it's a delicate question you asked. My missus always says as she would have a daughter to comfort our old years; but she never come. I'd fixed my 'art on it; but lor! what's the use? I'm getting over it now, an' I'm sartain my old woman would 'ave kep' her promise if she could. An' that's the truth. 'Now,' says she to me, when I brought this little 'un 'ome, 'Samwel,' says she, 'Providence have provided what natur' neglected. This little orpharn 'll be a daughter to us both.' And now I must be a-goin' 'ome."

"I intended asking you and your family to spend to-morrow, which is Christmas-day, and which should be devoted to brotherly love, and peace on earth, and goodwill towards men, with me at my house; but I must attend to my poor friend's funeral," said the little man, shaking Mr. Maggs by the hand. "But will you and all your family come to The Moat on New Year's Day?"

"Ay, matie—that we will," replied Mr. Maggs, shaking the hand he held in his frantically. "Brothers all, you say, an' brothers all it is!"

CHAPTER II.

At length the old year had drawn to a close, carrying with it the dust of hopes, fears, joys, sorrows, and good resolutions, all to be buried in the grave of the past. A new year would commence on the morrow—a year that would be welcomed with high hopes and brave resolves, few of which, alas! would ever be realised. It had always been the custom of Mr. Maggs and his family to watch the old year out and the new one in—to part from the former like an old friend with a loving cup, and to welcome the latter with a hopeful heart.

On this particular occasion Mr. Maggs and his wife determined to give a party—not an assembly of persons who would crowd their small rooms and refresh themselves with weak tea, but one or two friends who would sit down with them to a hearty supper, and play at speculation or forfeits, and perhaps join in a carol afterwards. In fact, the invitations were to extend no farther than next door.

"Mother," said Mr. Maggs at dinner that day, "I've been thinkin' 'twould be perlite to ask Mr. and Mrs. Drust and the little lady in this evenin'. What can you give us for supper?"

"Well, Samwel, there isn't much in the house," Mrs. Maggs replied. "There's the turkey we had for to-morrow, and the puddens."

"Wery good," Mr. Maggs said, approvingly. "Turkey and puddens aren't bad to begin on."

"Then there's the tripe," Mrs. Maggs continued, counting off the various articles on her fingers. "I can stew that."

"Wery good indeed," said Mr. Maggs, beaming. "I'm wery fond of stewed tripe."

"I can't think on anything else," Mrs. Maggs said, after considerable thought. "There's the plum pudden, to be sure, but it's awkward eating such like afore goin' to bed."

"Put down the plum pudden," observed her husband. "It's wery nice, and young people like it allays."

"It'll keep 'em from sleepin' when they go to bed," Mrs. Maggs replied.

"Wery good!" Mr. Maggs said, nodding his head knowingly. "They'll 'ave no excuse for lyin' in bed in the mornin' if they can't sleep, an' we must be up airly to go to see the little gentleman."

"Well, Samwel, we can do that if you like," Mrs. Maggs said. "You had better send in to Mr. Drust to ask 'em to come."

"Certain'y," her husband replied. Then turning to his son, he said, "Sam, go to Mr. Drust, an' ask him and his missus and Miss Mary Ann if they will come over this evenin'."

"Very well, father," Sam replied. "What time shall I say?"

"Six o'clock," Mr. Maggs answered. "And, Sam,

give 'em all our loves, and say we shall be wery much put out if they don't come."

"You will put it strong," said Sam. "I'll say you send your regards."

"No, Sam!" replied his father. "I said loves, and loves it is. I aren't a-goin' to do anything so mean as to send my regards at this 'ere season. You say loves, or I'll stop your beer."

"Very well," said Sam. "I suppose it will be time enough when I've finished my dinner?"

"Certain'y," his father replied. "But you must take care, Sam, or I'm blessed if you'll be able to walk a yard arter dinner, if you peg away in this 'ere fashion."

Now it happened on this occasion that Mr. and Mrs. Drust were not otherwise engaged, which was not all surprising, seeing they had few, if any, acquaintances, and they promised to be with Mr. Maggs punctually at the time named. Marion, also, for certain reasons of her own, which the young ladies who read this veracious history will, I have no doubt, at once discover, assured Sam in the most flattering manner that she should be delighted to come. This, I am bound to confess, delighted Sam too, although I have no doubt that it will be received with considerable astonishment. The last time we heard Sam express an opinion of that wayward young lady, he spoke of her in terms which, to say the least, were not complimentary. On that occasion he gave it as his opinion she was a little—well, let us say minx, and that he hated her. When he made that statement, the present writer, of course, knew it should be received *cum grano salis*. But even the

greatest scoffer at the waywardness of human nature, and particularly of that portion of human nature which is popularly believed to be immediately under the left side of the waistcoat, would hardly have supposed he would so soon have voluntarily resumed his chains after having thrown them off so energetically. Yet it is certain that his resolutions to care for her no more—begotten, it is true, of tobacco—all ended in smoke. And it may be here remarked that not only in matters of the affections is this astonishing inconsistency shown, but in numerous other cases. A bilious attack will make the City alderman swear he will eat and drink temperately for ever after; during an attack of gout the squire will vow he will become a Good Templar, and perhaps preside over temperance meetings; a sharp illness will make the rake a repentant sinner, and cause him to vow to live cleanly for the rest of his days, if he should only be let off *this once;* but immediately their healths return they fall into the old ways, and their promises are forgotten, and, if the moralist is to be believed, are helping to pave that particular spot which he declared to be tesselated with good intentions. So Sam, not suffering from the fumes of rank tobacco, was again a worshipper at the shrine of Venus.

"I am so glad you will come!" he said. "I mean, we are *all* glad you will come," he continued, as he observed the elevation of Marion's eyebrows.

"Oh, yes," she replied, "it is so kind of you. And you will be such a good boy, won't you, Sam?"

Sam vowed and protested he would be the best behaved lad in Manchester. Was there anything

he could do for her? No matter what it was, she had only to mention it, and it should be done.

"What sort of weather was it out of doors?" she inquired.

"Beautiful!" Sam replied. "So nice for walking."

"Is it?" she said, laughing. "I've a good mind to get you to take me out."

Sam assured her nothing would give him so much pleasure. He further informed her that he had at that moment a considerable sum of money in his pocket, amounting in all to seven shillings and sixpence, which he was prepared, nay, was desirous, to spend for her sole and particular enjoyment. And to make the prospect of a walk with him the more attractive, he told her of a shop in Cross Street where they sold the most delicious confectionery, and that at the same emporium of happiness and bower of delight they could also procure native oysters and the most delicious stout in the world.

"Oh, Sam, you absurd creature! as if I cared for oysters or stout!" she said, laughing, and showing two rows of the most beautiful teeth.

"Don't you?" he inquired, innocently. "I thought you were very fond of them, for I noticed the other night, when father took us to the theatre, and afterwards to Witcomb's, that you eat sixteen, and had two glasses of stout, to say nothing of the bread and butter."

"Sam, you are stupid, and very rude," replied Marion, blushing and laughing. "Don't you know you should never watch a lady eating? You would never give us a chance to live if you notice everything we eat and drink. I declare I shall never be

able to swallow another oyster but I shall think you are counting them."

"I meant no harm," Sam said, apologising. "You can't live without eating any more than other people, you know."

"Pardon me!" she answered. "*Ladies never eat,* at least, *until they are married.*"

"That is nonsense," Sam remarked. "They must eat some time or other."

"You are but a boy, Sam," Marion replied, "and know nothing of these things. They must eat, I allow, and they do eat, and heartily too; *but not in public, or where they may be observed.*"

"Then they do it on the sly, I suppose," said Sam.

"Of course, you stupid boy!" she answered, with a laugh. "They are what you would term very hearty feeders on the quiet—that is, until they are married. Married ladies can eat as much as they like in public or private—and do not scorn the privilege. It is quite proper for them, and nobody notices it."

"Then you eat like a married lady the other evening, I suppose?" Sam said.

"Well, you needn't remind me of it," she laughed. "I daresay I was very hungry, and couldn't be proper any longer."

"Then all I can say is, if you will come out with me we'll have some more oysters and stout, and you shall go at them like a married lady again if you like, and I'll not even look at you," said Sam.

"I—I don't know, Sam," she replied, thoughtfully. "Would it be right for me to go out with you alone?"

"Why not?" Sam asked. "I don't see any harm in it."

"I'm afraid it would not be correct. We had better have some one with us," she replied. "Would your mother go?"

"Couldn't think of it?" Sam answered. "She is busy getting ready for this evening."

"Perhaps your father would, then!" she said. "Run over and ask him, Sam."

"It's no use," he replied. "Father is sure to be helping mother."

"How provoking!" said Marion. "Well, I suppose we can't go, then. There's nobody else, unless —do you think Tom would go?" And she blushed, the artful little minx! Had Sam been well versed in the ways of the deceptive sex he would have seen through her at once, but he was ignorant of their wiles. Oh, woman, woman, you are very downy! as Mr. Maggs would have said.

Sam did not like to have a *tête-à-tête* walk with Marion interrupted by anyone. Besides that, Tom had grown into a very fine, handsome young fellow. So in answer to Marion's suggestion he frowned.

Marion saw the look of disappointment and displeasure in a moment. "You need not frown at *me*, Sam," she informed him. "*I* am not going out with any young man alone. Indeed, I shall not go out at all. Good afternoon, Mr. Maggs!" And she swept out of the room.

In a moment Sam was on his beam ends. He was all repentance, calling himself many opprobrious names, among which fool and donkey were not the worst. "Miss Zulmann! Marion!" he said, going

after her. "It's all right. I'll fetch him in a minute. I will, 'pon my word."

It was too late, however. That young lady was already in her bedroom, declaring to herself that the poor good-natured Sam was a stupid, jealous, disagreeable boy, and that she wished he would admire somebody else, for it worried her. She further resolved to snub him, shut him up, metaphorically tread on him, and otherwise ill-use and maltreat him on every possible occasion, until he ceased making such a noodle of himself and such a martyr of her. "It's worse than any of those people in his Book of Martyrs," she exclaimed; "and I'll serve him out for it."

Sam did not see her again until the evening, when she arrived punctually at six o'clock in company with Mrs. Drust. Her manner towards him during the greater part of the evening was cool, not to say chilling, and Sam was in consequence excessively miserable. Towards Tom she did not behave much better, for she snubbed him most unmercifully, although a close observer would have remarked the frequent glances she cast towards that young gentleman, who it must be confessed seemed to mind her very little indeed. From the first moment, however, she paid the most kind attention to the young orphan, who nestled up to her on the slippery sofa in Mr. Maggs's parlour in the most confiding and sisterly manner. The child was already becoming accustomed to her protectors, and the sense of loneliness and desolation had in a great measure worn off.

"What is your name, dear?" Marion asked of

the child, as she stroked her dark hair, and looked into her deep grey eyes.

"Mary," she replied. "What is yours? Are you called Mary too?"

"No!" Marion answered. "My name is Marion. You must call me Marion, for I hope we shall see each other very often."

"I shall be so glad," the child said.

"Do you think you will like me, Mary?" Marion asked, placing her arm round her waist.

"Yes, I think I shall," she replied, looking up at the beautiful face bent over her. "You are very beautiful, and I am sure I shall love you."

"Nonsense!" Marion said, as she blushed and laughed. "You are paying compliments. I should like you to love me, even if I were ugly."

While this conversation was going on between the two young girls, Mr. Maggs sat regarding them with a look of profound thought on his face. He pursed up his mouth, held his head on one side, and jingled the money in his trousers pockets against a bunch of keys in the most perplexing manner. At last he turned to Mr. Drust, who was taking prodigious quantities of snuff and beaming on everybody, and said, in a loud whisper, "Them two are a pair o' beauties, aren't they?"

"They are," the old gentleman replied, nodding and smiling. "They have the charms of youth and their sex; both of which you and I, my dear sir, are deficient in.

"Certain'y," Mr. Maggs said. "Jest look at 'em. They've both on 'em wery black hair, and a heap of it."

The old gentleman nodded.

"Both on 'em grey eyes," continued Mr. Maggs, solemnly.

"Very true," the old gentleman remarked.

"Both on 'em hooked noses and wery good teeth," said Mr. Maggs.

"Quite so! I've a fondness for aquiline noses. There's a deal of character in them. It is a remarkable thing, Mr. Maggs, that a large proportion of the great characters who have lived have been possessed of aquiline noses. There was Napoleon, for instance; and also the Duke of Wellington, who will not only be known to posterity as the godfather of a particular style of boot, but also as the godfather of a particular style of nose," the old gentleman said, with a humorous look in his single eye.

"Certain'y," Mr. Maggs observed. "It's wery strange though."

We will not stay to inquire what particular speculations Mr. Maggs was indulging in, for just then Mrs. Maggs entered the parlour, looking very red in the face and otherwise flurried, to inform them that the supper was quite ready. Mr. Drust immediately offered that lady his arm, evidently to her great surprise, for she first of all wiped her hands on her apron, and then said, "Lor!" This proceeding caused some consternation in the little room. They were evidently not in the habit of conducting Mrs. Maggs to dinner after the manner of politer circles. Mr. Maggs, indeed, appeared nervous. His eye wandered round the room in dismay, and he unbuttoned the two bottom buttons of his waistcoat,

pulled out his watch, and gave the company the correct time three times in as many seconds. Then he gave a low whistle, and observed in a whisper to Tom that "it was a wery rum start and no mistake."

"Do as Mr. Drust does," Tom whispered.

"Oh, certain'y!" Mr. Maggs replied. "I'll have the booty then," and he walked sternly to Marion, quite ignoring the presence of Mrs. Drust, who appeared to be excessively amused, and stopping suddenly before her, he wheeled round in the most stately manner, and after stretching out his arm to its fullest extent, bent his elbow elegantly in front of that young lady, and said, in a hoarse whisper, "Now then, my lovely, lay hold."

Marion did lay hold, after making Mr. Maggs the most amusing curtsey.

"Mr. Maggs," she said, laughing, "you should have taken in Mrs. Drust."

Mr. Maggs was regaining his confidence. "Not if I know it," he gallantly replied, giving Marion's hand a gentle pressure with his arm. "This is summut new to me, my splendid, but I'm wide awake all the same, and can tell a purty creature when I see her as well as any young 'un. Besides, the old lady have got hold of Tom, who is a good-looking young feller. She is best pleased as it is, you may depend."

"Mr. Maggs," Marion laughed, "I don't believe half you tell me. I'm afraid you are a gay deceiver. You shouldn't humbug a young inexperienced girl. I might get fond of you, and then, what would Mrs. Maggs say?"

Mr. Maggs was amused and delighted. "It's you as is a humbug," he observed. "You're a-coming it wery strong over the innocence of an old, elderly party."

"You should not say that I'm a humbug, Mr. Maggs," Marion replied. "I'm astonished that so gallant a gentleman should use such a term."

"No offence, my dear," said Mr. Maggs. "I didn't think it was so wery bad, or you wouldn't have called me a humbug."

"That is different," Marion replied, smiling on him. "Ladies are privileged persons. I know the term was not very proper for me to use, but we can say many things that you must not."

"Eh, my!" ejaculated Mr. Maggs. "Blowed if I didn't think 'twas the other way about."

"But it isn't," she replied. "I can call you anything I like, but you musn't return the compliment."

"With sartain exceptions," Mr. Maggs said. "If you should say I'm a nice-looking old boy, I can wenture to observe you're a wery bootiful young creetur."

"There you are again," laughed Marion. "I'll say it once more, though it isn't proper: you *are* a humbug, Mr. Maggs."

"No, I ain't," Mr. Maggs replied. "Ask the boys."

"Oh, they know nothing about it," she said. "Boys are boys, Mr. Maggs."

"So they are," Mr. Maggs replied. "That's a wery true observation. But they're wery good judges of purty girls, for I heerd Tom and Sam vow as you was a regular stunner."

Whatever the word stunner implied, it evidently was not disagreeable to Marion. She blushed, and for a considerable time during the supper was quiet. The conversation at the table did not flag, however, for Mr. Drust was quaintly humorous, and Mr. Maggs uproarously mirthful. Sam, however, as has been already intimated, was rather dull. His temper was tinged with melancholy.

"I wonder," he said, shaking his head gravely, "where we shall be this time next year."

"Yes, indeed!" his mother observed. "There's no knowing."

"Then what's the use o' wondering?" inquired Mr. Maggs. "If you wonder till you're black in the face you won't find out till this time next year comes. I think it's wery stoopid for people to go a-tryin' to find out what's goin' to happen a long time off."

"I once heard of a person who did find out what would happen to him in the future, and it made him miserable ever after," Mrs. Drust said.

"Sarve him right," said Mr. Maggs. "It's wery bad to be too coorious. Here's the ole year just a-dyin' away, and let us be glad for the marcies we have received, an' hopeful of the one as 'll be born to-morrow mornin'."

"We are becoming solemn," Tom remarked.

"Solemn be blowed—I mean, I'm wery sorry, ladies," Mr. Maggs said. "Let's change the conwersation, an' have a game o' speculation."

Mr. Maggs's proposal was greeted with applause, for the company were in some danger of becoming prosy. A pack of cards was therefore produced and dealt.

"What's the stakes?" Mr. Maggs inquired. "Is it nuts, buttons, or happence?"

"What shall it be, Mrs. Maggs?" said Mr. Drust. "We must get you to decide, or these young folks may want to gamble."

"I say halfpence," said Sam. "Halfpenny pool and halfpenny deal."

"No, let it be nuts!" said Marion. "We can play recklessly then and not be ruined."

"That's wery like 'em all," whispered Mr. Maggs to Mr. Drust. "It's my opinion they *would* go the pace but for fear the fiddler's expenses would be wery heavy."

"That is a severe opinion," the old gentleman replied, smiling.

"Not at all," Mr. Maggs informed him. "It shows they regard the consekences, which is wery proper of them."

"Now, Mrs. Maggs, we're waiting to begin," Tom said. "What are the stakes to be?"

"Indeed, Tom, I hardly know," Mrs. Maggs replied.

"Then let it be kisses," said Tom. "Here, Marion, you shall have the bank, and I'll pay you one for my pool and one for deal."

"We'll wait, if you please, Tom," Marion said, laughing. "Perhaps the stakes may be halfpence, and then you may not be so willing to pay."

"Bravo!" said Mr. Maggs, approvingly. "Wery good both of you. That's one each. Now then, mother, get along, old woman."

"Happence will lead to shillings, and that'll be gambling!" Mrs. Maggs replied, thoughtfully.

"Wery well! that's settled the happence," said Mr. Maggs, returning a canvas bag to his trousers' pocket.

"Then nuts is bad for indigestion," continued Mrs. Maggs.

"Wery well, then!" said Mr. Maggs. "Now how are we off for buttons?"

"We hav'n't got any excep' what you and the boys have got on," Mrs. Maggs replied.

"Then this ere won't do!" said Mr. Maggs, in great perplexity. "We can't cut our buttons off, because of the consekences. It might certainy be done with a belt, but there's on'y one between me and Sam and Tom. Your good man don't wear a belt, I s'pose?" he continued, turning to Mrs. Drust.

"I think not," replied the old lady. "Do you wear a belt, Ishmael?"

"No, my dear," answered her husband, who was taking enormous quantities of snuff.

"You couldn't tie your bracers round your waist, I s'pose, could you now?" asked Mr. Maggs, insinuatingly.

"I'm afraid not," replied the old gentleman, whose eye was beaming with fun and humour.

"We must give up the buttons then, mother!" said Mr. Maggs.

"Let us play for nuts," Marion suggested. "Never mind the indigestion."

"Well, I s'pose we must," Mrs. Maggs replied. "Only don't go and eat too many of 'em. They're very bad for the insides, especially after supper and afore going to bed."

The pool was formed and everybody became up-

roarious, and even Sam forgot the snubbing of the afternoon. Mr. Maggs was delightful. He offered to go partners with everybody who was winning. He persisted in losing immense quantities of nuts, and would take no denial in buying them back again at fabulous prices, from Marion and Mary. In fact, he was the merriest, youngest, most irrepressible soul there. The fun and noise were at their height when Mr. Drust, after looking at his watch, informed them it wanted but five minutes to twelve o'clock.

"Ah! he's nearly gone!" said Sam, with a deep sigh.

This observation was made in so miserable a tone that all present looked as though something very solemn were about to take place. Mr. Maggs, however, was determined to greet the new year with a smiling welcome.

"Sam," he said, "you're wery miserable to-night. Are you in love, or have you been to hear the rewiwals? This isn't the proper thing. We arn't agoin' to be miserable when we have to welcome the new-born year. No, maties! we'll have the little chap in with joy an' gladness. Tom and Miss Mary Ann, you two go outside the door and wait until you hear the clock strike twelve, and then come in and give us all a 'appy new year, and then Tom must kiss the ladies, and the little lady, the guv'nor and me and Sam."

"Must I go out alone?" asked Marion shyly, looking at Tom.

"No, my dear," Mrs. Maggs replied. "Tom 'll be with you."

"I'll take care of her," said Tom. "Come along, Marion."

"Now, Marion," he said, when they were outside the door, "I must wish you a happy New Year before we go in, or we shan't do it at all you know."

"I'm sure I wish you many happy years, Tom!" she said.

"As I do you, Marion," Tom replied, taking her hand, which trembled, in his. "But that is not all. I must kiss you. May I?"

She hung her head bashfully for a moment, and then lifted up her face to his. "Yes, Tom!" she answered, in a voice scarcely audible. "Dear Tom!"

If Tom had known as much at that moment as the reader can probably guess, who knows what might have happened! But he was terribly dull and stupid in some matters, though he could not help admiring her perfect beauty. He placed his hands one on each side of her blushing face, and kissed her once, saying, "There Marion. That is the kiss of a brother, for a brother I will be to you, and you shall be a sister to me."

The Cathedral bell at this moment boomed out over the city the hour of midnight, tolling the death-knell of the departing year. One moment of solemn silence, and the bells of a hundred steeples burst forth with peal after peal of music, welcoming the new-born year. Millions of hearts were at that moment throbbing with great resolutions and hopes, and a world of bitterness lay buried for ever in the past.

"Come," said Tom, "let us usher in the little stranger." And he knocked at the door.

"What cheer, matie!" Mr. Maggs called out in jovial tones. "Who be you at this hour o' night?"

"The new-born year!" replied Tom.

"Welcome, new-born year!" said Mr. Maggs, in ecstasy. "Have you got a matie with you?"

"Yes!" Tom replied.

"Who is it, new-born year?" returned Mr. Maggs, in a great state of excitement.

"Peace, hope, love, and charity!" Tom replied.

"Welcome peace, 'ope, love, and charity!" roared Mr. Maggs. "Welcome, new-born year! Welcome peace! Welcome hope! Welcome love! Welcome charity! Open the door, mother, an' let the glory in!"

And the glory of the pure in heart was there. And there were the four handmaidens of holiness—Peace, Hope, Love, and Charity, and they rested on every one of them, and took up their abiding place in one heart at least; and Marion that night retired to her room having discovered a deep well-spring of happiness—not unalloyed it is true—but still a deep happiness, which all came of one passionless kiss.

CHAPTER III.

At eight o'clock, Mr. Maggs and Mr. Drust and the two lads were at the Victoria Station. Mrs. Maggs declined leaving little Mary, and Mrs. Drust and Marion remained at home to keep them company. When the train stopped at the station where they had to get out, Mr. Seedly met them with a waggonette to drive them to The Moat. The little man was as rosy as ever, and greeted Mr. Maggs and Mr. Drust with great cordiality and warmth.

"A happy new year!" he said, shaking their hands as though he would never leave off. "A happy new year, and many of them. Ah, Ishmael! what a pleasure 'twould be if poor Joe were with us."

"Let us hope he is with a nobler company," said the old gentleman, reverently.

"Amen to that ere!" responded Mr. Maggs.

"I humbly trust he is," replied the little man. "Dear me! how I'm forgetting myself. Mr. Maggs, these are the young gentlemen, I believe, who rendered me so signal a service the other night."

"Wery true!" said Mr. Maggs, rubbing his hands. "Them's them."

"And which of them is my preserver?" asked the little man, warmly.

"Tom it is!" Mr. Maggs replied, slapping that young gentleman heartily on his shoulder. "This 'ere is the boy as saved your bacon."

"Sir," said Mr. Seedly, taking Tom's hand in his and pressing it, "I'm a man of few words, and may not be able to acknowledge the service you did me in fit language. But believe me, I am grateful to you from the bottom of my heart for the life you restored to me."

"I beg you will not name it, sir," Tom answered. "The pleasure of rendering you any service is of itself a sufficient recompense for any slight inconvenience I may have undergone."

Tom said this with the air of a man who has been educated in the most polite circles. Indeed, the lad's manner was perfect. This may perhaps excite some surprise when it is remembered that he had spent the last eight years of his life in Hulme Terrace. But then, his friend and tutor, Mr. Drust, was of the most polished manners, even if his exterior seemed rather the worse for wear. And perhaps, breed and pedigree—for Tom came of a race of gentlemen on both sides—count for something in men, as well as in the inferior animals.

It was evident Mr. Drust was pleased with his pupil. He glanced from him to Mr. Seedly, as though to mark the effect produced on the little man by the lad's bearing, and gently tapping Mr. Maggs on his arm, he said in an undertone, "Mark how well the lad carries himself, Mr. Maggs. He

may not be a genius, but Tom was undoubtedly born a gentleman."

"I'll back him!" Mr. Maggs replied, delightedly. "I'll warran' him. My missus made that wery obserwation the fust night I brought him home."

"Now, then, we'll get in if you please," said Mr. Seedly. "I haven't much harness work and the nag is fresh. Will you sit beside me on the box?" he continued, turning to Tom.

"I shall be delighted," Tom answered. "But where will your groom sit?"

"We'll find a place for him," said the little man. "He isn't very heavy; that's one comfort. Here, Dick, let go her head, and ride on the step behind."

Immediately the boy released the mare's head, that well-bred animal, with all the excitability of her sex, reared straight up, until Tom thought she would have come back on the carriage.

"It's only her play," said the little man. "Woa, lass! She's a nice mare. I've only had her a short time. I rode her in a very good thing the very day you picked me up in the river. She's a sweet goer, and equally good in harness or saddle. I drive my hunters all in their turn. By-the-by, do you ride?"

"I can't remember ever having been on horseback in my life," Tom replied.

"Haven't you?" said the little man, looking at Tom. "Well, I should have said I'd seen you somewhere before to-day; and if I were put on my oath, I should declare 'twas in the hunting field."

"That couldn't have been," Tom replied. "I have never seen a pack of hounds even on foot, and

I never recollect having seen you before the other night."

"That's queer, isn't it?" said the little man, again looking at the lad beside him very earnestly —so earnestly, in fact, that he nearly upset the carriage over a heap of stones. "I've got it into my head that I've not only seen you before, but have known you. What strange tricks our fancy plays us?"

"Very strange, if that is one of them," said Tom, laughing.

"My friend Maggs didn't tell me your name," continued the little man, apologetically. "You'll pardon my asking, but I don't feel like a stranger with you at all. I dare say it comes of what you did for me."

"My name is Burton," Tom replied.

"Burton! Burton!" murmured the little man to himself. "I don't recollect the name, though the face I'd swear to. Will you have a cigar, Mr. Burton?"

"Thank you," Tom replied. "I don't mind if it's a very mild one. I hardly know whether I can smoke one or not. The last time I tried, Sam and I burnt some exceedingly vile tobacco, and both of us were very ill after it."

"These are mild as milk," Mr. Seedly said, handing Tom his cigar case. "I shall have one myself." Tom took a cigar, and proceeded to lick it all over and then roll it in his hands, as he had seen other young fellows do."

"Don't do that!" the little man exclaimed. "You've spoilt it. Here, throw it away and have another."

"I thought that was the correct way to prepare a cigar for smoking," Tom replied, as he selected another.

"A great mistake, I assure you," the little man remarked. "There's a great art in smoking, and it's such a comfort, especially to a bachelor."

"I've heard married men say the same thing," observed Tom with a smile.

"Gad! I expect they are right too," Mr. Seedly said, laughing. "It's good all round."

For some time they drove on in silence. Tom was beginning to realise the delight of his first genuine cigar, and sat on the box with his arms folded in blissful enjoyment. Presently he looked up at his companion and smiled as he knocked off the ash with the tip of his little finger. The smile deepened as he saw the little man regarding him fixedly, and heard him say unconsciously to himself, "I'll swear I've seen him before. The same face, the same smile, the very same seat, and manner of holding his weed. Where the deuce was it?"

"You'll be over another heap of stones if you don't take care," said Tom, laughing.

"Eh!" said the little man coming to himself, and actually blushing. "Pretty well, thank you. Have another."

"I haven't got through this one yet," Tom answered. "And I fancy it will be quite enough, too."

During the remainder of their drive, Mr. Seedly sat in silence, puffing out huge clouds of smoke, and occasionally casting shy glances at his companion, after which he would shake his head in the most

mysterious manner. The little man was wrapped up in his speculations as to where he had seen Tom before, nor did he rouse himself from his reverie until the mare stopped at the gate of the drive leading to The Moat.

"Well, I declare," he said. "Here we are at last. Really, I didn't think we were so near home. That's The Moat," continued Mr. Seedly, when the boy got up behind again. "Queer looking old place, isn't it? Not bad quarters for a bachelor, though."

"It looks very picturesque," Tom replied. "The trees at the back must be beautiful in summer."

"They're limes and chestnuts," Mr. Seedly said. "I like them better than any other timber about a place. Perhaps that is because I have no other sort. But here we are."

"The groom took the carriage round to the yard at the back, and Mr. Seedly welcomed his visitors to the house. There was a blazing fire in the dining-room, and luncheon was laid for them when they entered.

"Now then," said the little man, "you must be hungry after travelling in this frosty weather. Sit down. There's tea, coffee, ham, eggs, buttered toast, grouse pie, and stewed kidneys. What will you take, Mr. Maggs?"

Mr. Maggs declared he was not very hungry, but that to keep his host in countenance he would take about half a pound of steak to commence with.

"Mr. Burton, shall I send you some grouse pie?" said the little man. "Gad! wherever was it I've seen him before?" The latter part of this speech

was made in an undertone, and intended for no one's ears in particular."

Tom took some grouse pie, and Sam despatched a considerable number of stewed kidneys, and altogether they did justice to the luncheon and Mrs. Bickley's cooking. As often, however, as Tom happened to look at his host, he found that little gentleman's eyes fixed on him in the most speculative and wondering manner, and as often as the little man was caught, he immediately withdrew his gaze with something like confusion, or informed Tom he was very well, and had never, to his recollection, been better in his life.

After luncheon was over, Mr. Seedly showed his visitors the stables, and expatiated warmly on the various merits of his horses: how that one was about the safest at timber he ever threw his leg over, and this one was such a clipper at water, and expressed his regret that he wasn't twenty years younger, for had such been the case, he informed them, he would show the field the time of the day and no mistake. He next showed them his fox-terriers, and offered Tom a game, handsome son of Old Jock, out of Vic, whose value, he informed them, was beyond calculation.

Mr. Maggs was delighted with everything he saw, especially with the terriers, and Sam vowed in his heart that as soon as he had made fifty thousand pounds on the stage, he would retire and take to fox hunting and a country establishment.

At five o'clock they had a cosy dinner, and at half-past seven prepared to leave. Before they went, however, Mr. Seedly took Mr. Drust on one

side, and inquired of the old gentleman what he knew respecting Tom. Mr. Drust, however, could tell him nothing more than that Mr. Maggs had found him exhausted early one morning in the streets some eight years previously, and had brought him home for the sake of blessed charity; and that he was an excellent lad, was naturally a gentleman, and that under his tuition he had become a fair scholar.

"I could swear I've seen him before, Ishmael," the little man said, while the look of perplexity deepened on his countenance. "I recognised his face in a minute; and his manner, his look when he fixes his eye on you, and the very way he sat in the trap and held his cigar, I could almost swear to."

"That blow you received on your head the other night has confused you, I expect," the old gentleman replied, smiling.

"Nothing of the sort," the little man said, warmly. "I'm quite right there, and I shall find out presently, I'm certain. But it is so perplexing. What is he going to do? I mean how will he earn his living? Our friend Maggs, I suppose, won't be in a position to put him to a business or a profession. Of course, that's out of the question, and it would be a sin for such a lad to run to seed."

"There is no fear of his running to seed. He will not have time enough on his hands for that," the old gentleman answered. "He is rather an active-minded fellow, and is a tolerably fair chemist. I think we might manage to get him a place as an assayer under a mining company."

"Is that a very good profession?" inquired Mr.

Seedly. "They are very apt to be sent to some wild, uncivilized place in South America, aren't they?"

"It might be worse," the old gentleman answered. "I think if we can manage to get him something of the kind, he will be very fortunate. He has no relatives to help him, and his few friends are not in a position to do much."

"Well, don't be in a hurry about it," said the little man. "Who knows? something may turn up, and you know *I'm* in his debt."

"You might be of considerable help to him," Mr. Drust said. "Very considerable. I dare say you are surprised that I should feel so much interested in the lad, and 'pon my word I am myself sometimes."

"Not at all," replied the little man. "Why *I* am interested in him too, though I've never spoken to him before to-day, or at least, he says I haven't; but I've my own opinion on that."

"You have good reason to be," Mr. Drust said.

"Indeed, that's true. I'll never forget it," the little man replied. "The other is a fine lad too, and they tell me he's quite a genius."

"Sam will astonish the London world some day," Mr. Drust said, warmly. "I'm mistaken if that lad doesn't become the head of the theatrical profession."

"Well, Ishmael, give me your advice. I should like to make them a present of something as a sort of a new year's gift," said the little man. "I hardly know what to offer them. They aren't boys, and they aren't men, and it's a regular poser. Do you think they would accept a trifle—say a hundred

pound? They could have no end of fun with it you know."

"Better not," replied Mr. Drust significantly. "I fancy they would not like it."

"Well, what the deuce can I offer them?" asked the little man in the greatest perplexity. "If I don't do something of that sort, you will think I'm ungrateful, while God knows I am not."

"My dear Silas," said the old gentleman, offering the little man his snuff-box, "take a pinch of snuff, and listen to me. When you and I were young fellows, you had rather a fondness for jewellery."

"So I had," the little man replied, smiling. "I remember it very well, Ishmael, especially as at that time I couldn't afford to indulge my taste that way."

"I dare say most other lads have a fancy for the same. I myself recollect staring in at a certain shop window, when I was a lad, and longing to be possessed of a garnet ring which was marked seventeen shillings and sixpence," said the old gentleman. "I dare say these young fellows have certain aspirations that way, as well as you and I."

"A very good idea," replied the little man delightedly. "I've got the very thing upstairs, and I'll get it ready and give it them at the station just before the train starts, and then I sha'n't have to make a speech over it."

When Mr. Seedly was ready to drive his visitors to the station, a close observer of exteriors would have observed, before he had buttoned up his overcoat, that he wore in his scarf as a pin a beautiful pearl set round with diamonds; that his fat little hand was adorned with a large emerald ring of con-

siderable value; and what was most wonderful of all, that he carried two watches, the gold chains of which hung over his waistcoat. Altogether he looked not unlike a walking jeweller's shop.

When they had taken their seats in the railway carriage, there was a good deal of handshaking and good-byes. Mr. Maggs promised to repeat his visit to The Moat, and to bring his "missus;" and Mr. Seedly declared that before long he would make his appearance in Hulme Terrace.

"And now," said the little man, "I've just one thing more to say before the train starts. Mr. Sam, I hope you will accept this pin and wear it in memory of Christmas eve, and as a token of my gratitude to you." And he took the pearl and diamond pin from his scarf, and placed it in Sam's hand.

"And," continued the little man speaking rapidly, and taking the emerald ring from his finger and placing it, and a handsome gold watch and guard in Tom's hand, "Mr. Burton, pray accept this. I hope shortly to remember where I've seen your face. Good-bye! The train is off!" And he sprang from off the carriage step where he had been standing, waved his hand, and was out of reach of their protestations and their thanks in a moment.

"There goes a wery good little man, as has got a 'art as is a 'art," said Mr. Maggs.

When Mr. Seedly got into his carriage he handed the reigns to his groom. "Here, John," he said, "you drive. I want to think a bit."

During the whole of the drive home he was wondering where he had seen Tom before. The face haunted him, and gave him no rest. He thought of

it while he was having supper. It stared at him from out of the live coals in the fire, and smiled on him from the depths of his glass of whisky-and-water. Even the smoke from his long clay pipe, in which he indulged every night before going to bed, formed wreaths which seemed to encircle it. If he looked at the decanter, the face was reflected on its surface. He could think of nothing but that he had seen that face, had known that manner before, but as to where, he could not bring his mind to discover. On that one point his brain seemed paralysed. He could get no farther than the belief in his recognition of Tom. To aid his thought and brighten his intellect, therefore, he partook of rather more whisky than was usual with him, and smoked more tobacco than was good for him. Then he piled more wood on the fire, which blazed and sputtered and crackled, and gave out a most delightful glow, and the shadows in the room grew deeper, occasionally relieved by the flickering light from the burning logs, as the candles burnt themselves down into their sockets and went sputtering out.

Whether from the heat of the fire, the somniferous qualities of the whisky, the fumes of the tobacco, or from all three combined, we cannot state; but certain it is that, after staring at the fire for a considerable time, Mr. Seedly fell asleep. This in itself is not remarkable, I admit. It is, I believe, a common occurrence for people to feel sleepy towards ten o'clock at night. The present writer from his own experience can vouch for the sleepy influence of a blazing fire and good tobacco. And I believe everyone will allow that whisky is provocative of

nature's soft nurse, or why would it be taken so regularly under the name of a "night-cap"? Neither was it at all remarkable that Mr. Seedly should dream, as he sat in his chair, of what had been perplexing him all day. I believe this to be also a common occurrence. But what *was* remarkable was the fact of his solving in his dream the problem that he had failed to work out in his waking moments.

He dreamed he was again five-and-twenty, the age of hope and love. That he was wandering in green meadows and on the banks of pleasant streams in company with a beautiful girl, who pensively and without emotion listened to his words of love and affection. He heard himself refused, and experienced that feeling of despair which bruises but not breaks the heart of youth. Then he thought her brother, who had *her* features, *her* eyes, and whom he loved for her dear sake, came to him and bade him pluck up courage and wait. That after a time he renewed his suit, became the friend of her family, and was once more rejected. That he had again felt the bitterness of despair; had again found hope spring up in his heart, had nourished it until he once more sought her love, and was not rejected. He felt all the bliss of that moment, when in answer to his impassioned pleadings for her love, she had promised to be his wife in passionless tones. He thought he again imprinted on her cold and death-like cheek his first and only kiss. Again, he saw her in the little room after he had left her, sobbing her heart out on the sofa, and the bitter pang of jealousy struck him again to the heart. Then the

phantasies of his brain came hot and fast, and he panted and struggled in his sleep like some one in a death grapple. He saw himself on the morning fixed for his marriage, struck down in the very abyss of misery. Her brother was bending over him with a sorrowful face, and telling him to bear himself like a man. He gave him the fatal letter telling him of her flight; and with a deep groan the little man awoke, pale, haggard, and in a profuse perspiration. With some difficulty he succeeded in procuring a light, and on referring to his watch, he found he could not have slept more than a quarter of an hour or twenty minutes.

"Gad! that's rum!" he said to himself, wiping his face with his handkerchief. "In those few minutes I've lived over five years. It was awful, though I know now where I've seen that dear lad's face."

Proceeding to an old-fashioned escritoire which stood in the room, he opened it, and touching a secret spring, took from a small drawer a bundle of old letters and two miniatures. They had evidently laid there undisturbed for some time, for a coating of dust was on them, which he reverently wiped away. The first of the miniatures he opened was that of a young girl of about eighteen years of age, of the most singular resemblance to Tom. Every feature in the miniature might have been copied from his, with the exception of its feminine grace. The other was the likeness of a young man of about six-and-twenty, still bearing the same remarkable likeness to Tom, but of a more manly expression.

The little man gazed on the portrait of the young

girl long and earnestly. At last he heaved a deep sigh, and closing the case, said, "That was a terrible blow you dealt me, dear, and perhaps I deserved it. I had thought never to look on your likeness again, until my eyes were being closed in death.

"But," continued the little man, after a moment's pause, regarding the portrait of the young man with peculiar tenderness, "*you* are a noble fellow, though you *did* make a mistake there. The lad is like both of you; but his look, his smile, his manner, are all your own, Bob. I knew I had seen him. It's but yourself, Bob, come back to me in your youth, your beauty, and your strength, and for *her* sake and for yours—aye! and for his own, I'll love him, and cherish him. And he shall be to me as a son, and I to him as a father.

"And, now the old sore is reopened, I may as well probe it home," said the little man, untying the bundle of letters and looking at the faded characters. "I've gone through the bitterness of it, so I may as well read them. Lord! Lord! how inscrutable are thy ways."

CHAPTER IV.

The reading of old letters is oftentimes an employment of considerable pain. They may recall the memory of things better forgotten, and reopen old wounds which time had seared over. They may perhaps bring to mind some loved one long dead—some old love—some old slight—some long since forgotten and perhaps forgiven injury. It may be they recall the memory of some old triumph, or some long past pleasure; but the momentary light that beams in the eye of the reader is quenched when he perhaps calls to mind that the sharers of those triumphs and pleasures are, like the circumstances, long since past away, and nothing but their memory remains.

It was, then, with a sadness not usual with him that Mr. Seedly selected from the bundle of old letters which he held in his hand three, the characters of two of which time had almost effaced. They were written in a thin, cramped hand, peculiar to ladies. The first he opened, he held for some moments as though he dreaded reading it. This was only for a moment, however, and drawing the candle closer to him, he proceeded to decipher the almost illegible writing. It was as follows:—

"Dear Mr. Seedly,—It is with considerable pain and no small surprise I have received a second proposal of marriage from you. Pain, because it again forces on me the unpleasant task of declining your offer. And surprise, that you should have made that offer after my refusal of your proposals of two years ago. No one can regret the pain I am bound to cause *you* more than I do. I esteem you, believe me, as much as I do anyone living. But esteem is a sentiment not strong enough to warrant our marriage. The risk would be too great, to build the chances of a life's happiness on a feeling in which others beside yourself may participate. I am sure you will agree with me that nothing but love could ever secure the happiness of two persons entering into that bond which you propose, and that love I cannot give you. I have tried, but our affections cannot be subjected to arbitrary rules, nor are they dependent on friendship. I know how deeply my own family will be disappointed, for they as well as myself esteem you most highly. I hope, therefore, you will endeavour to forget me, or if you do think of me, try to regard me as one who has prevented you from committing an error that might have embittered your whole future life.

"Believe me, my dear Mr. Seedly,

"Yours very faithfully,

"Clara Eversley."

The little man continued to gaze at the letter for some time after he had finished reading it, evidently lost in thought. At length he folded it and placed it on the table, saying, "You were plain

enough there, dear. I had no excuse for persecuting you after that with my attentions. Any other man would have seen your heart was engaged elsewhere, and that the case was hopeless. I was blind, blind, blind. *You* never deceived me. It was I who deceived myself. And *what* a punishment my blindness brought on me! Even now, after twenty years have passed over my head, I feel it."

The other letter in the same handwriting he then took up and unfolded. In places the writing was blurred and smeared. He cast a hasty glance at it and then laid it down again. "I can't read *you*," he said, addressing the yellow paper and faded characters, "without help. Even now, after so many years, and at my time of life, I shall feel the knife. I must have a glass of brandy."

The little man walked to the sideboard, and with a trembling hand poured out a wineglassful of brandy and drank it. The rosy hue of his face had faded away, and he looked almost as pale and haggard as on the night when Tom rescued him from the foul, slimy embraces of the river.

"I'm getting nervous," said the little man, reseating himself, and again taking up the letter. "I wouldn't have taken brandy to enable me to charge a stiff post and rails even now. But this letter is more formidable to me than any fence I've ever seen yet. But I must get it done, or the effects of that jumping powder will have died away, and I'll be in a worse state than before. Confound it, how my heart is beating. I've had a double tooth out with less fear, and pulled through a com-

mercial panic when houses were falling like skittles, with a deal more pluck than I've got at this minute. Well! here goes!"

This was the letter which caused the little man so much fear and trembling.

"My dear Mr. Seedly,—I scarcely dare write to you. I could not do it, but that I must ask your forgiveness. Whenever I think of it I hate myself even more than you can hate me. I ought never to have accepted you. It was wicked of me when I never loved you. But they made me do it. Oh, *do* try to forgive and forget me. You know I told you twice I could never love you. Why *did* you press me after that? You could not expect me to confess my secret to you, but you ought to have guessed my heart was in the keeping of another. And I do love him so. And I could not love you as you ought and deserve to be loved. My crime, for it is a crime, and one I shall never forgive myself for, is that I allowed things to take their course up until the last moment. If I had married you, loving another as I do, I should have been doing you an irreparable injury, and should have ruined the happiness of us both. And so I have taken refuge in flight, and in company with my husband, for we were married this morning. I shall leave England in the course of a few days, in all human probability never to return. Pray try to forgive me. If I could only believe you would forgive, and in time forget me, whose only fault was my not having been firm enough to withstand the solicitations of my family, I should be happy. I have blotted this

with my tears, and if tears could wipe out the pain and humiliation I have caused you, and which must be almost too great for forgiveness, I would wash them out. Forgive me! Oh, forgive me!

"CLARA."

On the last sheet, in a man's scrawl, was written:—

"'Pon my soul I *am* sorry for you, but it can't be helped, you know. Clara and I have been in love with each other ever so long. I can quite imagine how cut up you must be. I know I should be if she had married *you*. Indeed, I should have been in such a deuce of a way, I'm sure I should have throttled you when you came out of church. We were married this morning, and I'm sure you'll be glad to hear that. We sail to-morrow. Keep up your pecker, my dear fellow. It's all the fortune of war. To-day to me, to-morrow to thee, you know. I know *you* very well, and have had my eye on you (which, I suppose, won't surprise you, considering the circumstances) for some time past, and I think you'll get over it in time. If you would take my advice, you would hunt two days a week instead of one. It's a splendid thing for your case, and I'll take two to one you'll ride like the devil.

"Yours, very sorrowfully,

"T. B., Captain."

Mr. Seedly laid the letter down with a sigh, and sat staring at the burning logs on the hearth. This explained the secret of the little man's life, and was the answer to Mrs. Bickley's wonder why he

had not married. He had had the disease of love like most of us; but the attack was a severe one, and he had never recovered from its effects.

"That was a tough job," he said to himself. "I'm glad I've gone through it, though. I can see my way plain enough now. The remarkable resemblance I see in the lad is the resemblance to my old love and to her brother. I thought I could not be mistaken. He is her son. The postscript written by her husband proves it to my mind. His initials were T. B. The lad's initials are the same. No doubt he was called after his father, and his name was Thomas Burton. Yes! yes! it's plain enough. But I'll look through Bob's letter, too, and unless I forget, he confirms me in that opinion by giving his name. Let me see."

And now the little man took up the third letter, written in the bold handwriting of a man—every letter characteristic of the writer, firm, bold, and plain. "Dear old boy!" murmured the little man, smiling. "There's no mistaking your fist."

"My dear Silas,—When I saw you nine years ago, I daresay you thought I had gone irrecoverably to the dogs. I'm sure you did. I thought so too. I was a waif, a stray, pitching about hopelessly on the mudbanks of society. When I left you I set out to walk to Stowe to see Fanny, who, you know, married the rector there. By the most singular chance in the world—in fact, the result of my taking up the cudgels on behalf of a child I saw a fellow ill-using, and to whom I gave a taste of the science you and I acquired together when lads—I

fell in with Arthur Kelmarsh, who drove me home with him. You may imagine this visit was not a pleasant prospect. I was in terribly low water at the time, and I must say I presented a sufficiently disreputable appearance to warrant my being taken up by the police as a vagabond. During the little dispute to which I refer, some friend or confederate of the fellow I was engaged with kindly broke my head, emptied my pockets, and left me insensible in the road, where Kelmarsh found me. However, with the aid of a little plaster, and a good deal of warm water, I repaired damages at Middlehurst, and in a suit of Arthur's evening clothes I made a figure sufficiently respectable to warrant my joining them in the drawing-room. I have faced many an awkward situation since I became the butt of fortune; but I never felt so thoroughly afraid, or so much of a coward, as I did when I entered that room. I had thought my heart was pretty well seared over, Silas, and that the old wound—and you know what such wounds are—was healed. Until that moment I could have sworn I could have met *her* calmly, have heard *her* speak, have spoken to *her* without emotion. But I discovered that when one is hit as you and I were, right down into the depths of the heart, time may, perhaps, heal over the wound with a thin crust, but so thin that a glance of the loved one's eyes, the merest tone of her voice, nay, the very rustle of her dress will send a thrill through one that reopens the wound, and calls forth from the tomb of the past where you had buried them, and fan them into a burning, glowing, scorching flame, those bitter sweet tortures

of love. I discovered all this, my dear fellow, before I was in her presence one minute—before I even raised my eyes to her beautiful face. I have scarcely any recollection of what passed during the first quarter of an hour. There was a mist before my eyes, a choking sensation in my throat, and, worst of all, a perfect paralysis of the faculties, which left me confused and blind to all but that *she* was there—that I was in *her* presence. And that presence filled the whole room, Silas. I cannot tell you with what contempt for myself I again felt the power which I thought had been dead, or that the silken chains which I now bless, but then felt of iron, were still on me. But the fact was all the same. I loved her as passionately, as fondly, as deeply as in the old days when you and I used to build castles in the air. How I addressed her at first I do not know. Kelmarsh and his wife, who is a most amiable little woman, must have seen my distress, for they did all they could to put me at my ease. Presently, however, the clouds which were on my brain—the mental paralysis of which I spoke—cleared away, and I soon discovered that *she* was true; that *her* heart had always been steadfast; that I, the purposeless vagabond, bronzed, weather-beaten, and scarred, was still to her the Bob Eversley to whom she had given her heart in the old, old days; and before I left Middlehurst I heard from *her* dear lips that the old love was as strong as on the day I first kissed her sweet face. She made me promise to commence a new start in life—to float another venture—to throw off the vagabond habits I had acquired, for her dear sake. Even at

that moment, Silas, she would have joined her lot with mine. But that was a sacrifice I was unworthy of. There was the prize though to be won still, and I determined to win her—to be worthy of her; and that night, for the first time for many long years, I asked His help and guidance, humbly and trustfully, I hope, and vowed that for her dear sake I *would* be found worthy, and some bright, glorious day return, bearing my sheaves with me.

"It is wonderful, my dear lad, what can be achieved by a man of determination and of singleness of purpose. Obstacles to the desired end but increase his courage. The barriers to the promised land fall away before him like chaff. If he does get a knock-down blow, he is at it again as soon as he gets his second wind, more determined than ever. Never is the old adage that 'familiarity breeds contempt' more strongly illustrated than in this. The more kicks from fortune you get, if your heart is in the right place, and you have stamina, the less you care for them. You are on the verge of ruin to-day, and you say to fortune, 'That's one to you; to-morrow it will be my innings, and I'll squeeze the lemon to some purpose.' It's my opinion that an elastic, hopeful, sanguine nature is far better for the fight of life than a stronger and harder nature. The hard man collars fortune, and it's war to the knife. He often wins the battle, but seldom, if ever, recovers if he comes out of the struggle second best. He is not bent—nothing could do that—but he is broken, shattered, utterly smashed. The hopeful man, however, takes his gruel kindly—falls easily with the blow—and, as we used to say after a bout with the

gloves, comes up smiling. His creed is, if I'm beat to-day, I'll have a shy at fortune again to-morrow, and keep pegging away at her. I must win at last, if I can only keep on long enough. I was hopeful enough now. I saw a future before me again; and after I had seen Fanny, I started for the promised land—the land of gold, and sheep, and boundless acres. Within a month after I had left Middlehurst, I was working my passage to Brisbane. When I arrived there, a great talk was created among squatters by the report of Mr. Cunningham of magnificent and boundless grazing grounds away on the Darling Downs. I engaged myself under a Mr. Leslie to push on with a quantity of stock to those pastures, and form a station. I shall not attempt in the compass of a letter to describe to you the boundless wealth of the country, or the manner of our life there. It is sufficient that, after spending twelve months on Mr. Leslie's station, I left him and proceeded to Melbourne, where I held some town lots, with the intention of realizing. I had never looked after this property since I had bought it, and my surprise was something great when I found to what an extent the value had increased. I sold one half for ten thousand pounds, and invested the greater portion of that sum in sheep and cattle, and became the proprietor of a station. I took up about eighty square miles of land away beyond the Leslies. The station is called Tangaboora. If I were to tell you all the struggles I had at first, I should tire you. Soon after I had settled there the blacks became troublesome, and in the first six months I was twice burnt out. Then we had a year of

drought, and the streams became dry; the water-holes were exhausted, and the sheep and cattle had to be driven away in search of other pastures, their track being marked by the putrid carcases of the dead. But hope buoyed me up, Silas, and after each knock-down blow I came up to the scratch smiling. After two years of this work, the air being like the breath of a furnace, we had a change. I was sitting under the verandah, smoking and wondering how many more such blows I was to receive before I had my innings; and to tell the truth, Silas, I was becoming rather gloomy, for, to carry the metaphor farther, my head had been in chancery for some time, and I was becoming groggy. Everything seemed dead. The cigar didn't draw nicely; and there was something oppressive in the atmosphere, although the sky was like brass. I had lighted and thrown away, I should think, a dozen weeds, and was about to try another, when I felt a puff of air on my cheek. This was a good sign. Perhaps, I thought, we shall have rain at last. Oh, how I whistled and prayed for it. Presently I saw a small black cloud away on the horizon, which rose and spread with incredible swiftness over the whole sky; and then didn't it come down! Such rain I never saw. Not in drops, but literally in bucketsful. It lasted a week, and by the end of that time, what had for months been dry ravines and stony courses were now raging, roaring, resistless, impetuous streams and rivers. Everything freshened up after this; vegetation seemed to spring up like magic; the stock put on flesh, and the squatters once more became hopeful. It had been a hard trial for us

all, though, and not a few went to the wall. Just before the rain came, first class stations could be purchased on the easiest terms. But no sooner had the parched earth been quenched than prices went up again. That year I had a splendid clip of wool, and the lambing season proving above the average, I could go to bed again without lying awake all night calculating how long I could keep off the crash that I began to believe must come. Our troubles were not all over, however, for the country became infested with a gang of bushrangers. They travelled on horseback long distances in incredible short spaces of time, and pillaged the stations they came across, committing murders in the most wanton manner, and subjecting the women, many of whom were delicately-nurtured ladies, to the worst indignities. From the bottom of my heart I was thankful I was at that time alone in the world. Had I a wife and family with me, I think anxiety would have killed me. One night, after I had gone to bed, a messenger came from the Leslies' station, covered with dust and foam. His horse fell dead the moment he reached the house. He came with a message for us to be prepared for the bushrangers, for they had come down on the Leslies, and robbed them of everything they wanted, and they had been heard to say they should come on to Tangaboora. I had four men then in the house. There was my head man, a hard-headed Scotchman; two assigned servants, one of whom had flourished at home under the name of the Liverpool Chicken; and the Leslies' messenger. The living part of the house is only of one story. Underneath, or on the ground floor, I

had had a shed made for stabling a stock horse or two, as it was handy. We immediately got our nags into this place, and having secured them, I armed the lads and waited for the expected visitors. They arrived soon after daylight, seven of them. They were as evil-looking a lot of rascals as one would wish to see. One of them, the leader, was a handsome fellow, for all that; and I thought what a pity it would be to shoot him, as I fully intended doing. They little expected that any preparations were made for their reception, for they rode straight up to the verandah, and called to me to come out. I remained silent, however, intending that when I did answer them it should be to the purpose. Then the leader called out, 'Eversley, come out here! We don't want to hurt you, but we intend having the swag.' I merely threw open the door, and told him it was my intention to shoot him; and immediately after the crack of my piece he threw up his arms, and said, 'I'm shot. You had better leave him, boys.' The door was shut again immediately I had fired. Several broadsides were exchanged between us after this, and another of the rascals was killed. We were now only man to man, so I turned to the lads with me, and asked them whether they were game to have a shy at them in the open. They said they should like it. 'Lead on, guv'nor,' said the Chicken; 'let us force the fighting.' There was a trap-door in the floor of the house, that led by a ladder into the stable; so down we went, and presently we dashed out on them. I had my old cavalry sword, and I wrote my mark on one of the villains. Heavens! how they did ride! The fellow I struck

down had as neat a cut through the back of his head as you would wish to see. We pursued them a mile or so, and then returned, to view one of the most exciting bits of science I ever witnessed. The Chicken was engaged, on foot, with one of the gang, the former having nothing but his fists, the bush-ranger being armed with a knife. The Chicken sparred beautifully. We were about to rush on the scoundrel, but the Chicken begged us to leave him alone. 'I'm twice the man now I was when at home,' he cried, 'and I'll lick his head off.' Faith, and he did, too. And thank God, my dear Silas, the two villains were hung at Sydney as high as Haman. This broke the gang up, and though that happened six years ago, we have been free from the vermin ever since.

"When I found myself on my legs again, I began to think of the promise I had made Jane—to be worthy of her and to go back to her. Not that I had ever forgotten it, Silas!—indeed that promise and the hope of fulfilling it kept up my pluck in many a dark and anxious hour. I had made the dear girl the judge of my actions and the appraiser of my worth. If I meditated doing a thing, I always asked myself the question, 'Will it please *her* when she hears of it?' 'What will *she* think of it?' 'Would *she* have me do it or not? and if she would, would she like it done this way or that way?' I don't know whether you believe in a sympathy between two persons, which, like a bridge, spans infinite space, and to which time, distance, and seasons are as nothing. It is a question I had discussed with myself frequently about this time, and I began to believe

there was some such power that annihilated all material obstacles. But I have given over speculating on it now, and leave it to the spiritualists. At any rate, I began to believe in *her* presence. I felt *she* was with me and about me, and that belief has saved me from many things which would otherwise have been matters for regret. So when things had settled down in the old groove, and the station was thriving, I felt the time had come to redeem my promise. I was becoming, comparatively speaking, once more wealthy, without the old restless feeling and longing for change. I looked about for a steady man to take my place as overseer, but such men were not easy to find at that time. Plenty of smart fellows were to be had, it is true, but they were for the most part unsteady, and I did not care to risk the labour of years. I had written to Kelmarsh occasionally, and on each occasion had enclosed a letter for Jane. I heard from her sometimes too, and those letters, believe me, were the green spots in my existence. I thought the matter over for a long time and determined to put it to her—if she thought I had better come home, I would return; but if she would come out to me I would meet her at Brisbane or Sydney, and we could be married immediately she landed. I heard from her by the next mail. She said she would have me run no risk, and that she thought it better that, after so many years of toil and anxiety on account of the station, I should not run the chance of a failure by my absence, and that she would come out to me. She did come, and I met her at Sydney, and we were married the day after she had landed. There were no bridesmaids, no

muslin, no tears, no speeches. There was no one present at the sacrament (I will not say ceremony) but an old white-haired clergyman, a big sunburnt fellow with a grizzled moustache, a beautiful pale-faced woman, and the pew-opener. We wanted no more witnesses to our happiness, Silas, and we went back to our hotel like a couple of staid, elderly folks, who had been man and wife for years. We remained only long enough in Sydney to show the dear girl—for she is still young in my eyes—the wonders of the place, and then came on to Brisbane, and from there to Tangaboora. My life since then has been one of great pleasure, mixed with some few sorrows. The greatest sorrow I have had was the birth and death of our first child. I had been off in the bush after a mob of sheep, and during my absence some one brought word to the station that I had been killed by the blacks. When I returned there was a little rough-made coffin in a back room, and my dear wife was hovering between life and death. I thank God that though He took the life He had given us, He spared *her*. Since then we have had three other children, two boys and a dear little girl; and I can say that though my happiness came late yet it has been perfect.

"And now, my dear Silas, for a little news which I feel sure will interest you, and, I fear, pain you. You know in this country, where there are scarcely any houses of entertainment, in fact, none at all, between stations, we keep open house for travellers. About eighteen months ago it was our fortune to entertain a Major Harpton, who was forming a station on beyond Tangaboora. It happened that in

looking over my wife's photographic album he came to the portrait of poor Clara. He seemed to recognise her instantly. He asked me whether she was a relation, and the question was a natural one, for I bear some resemblance still to our poor lost darling. 'I knew her,' he said. 'Her husband, Captain Thomas Burton, served with me in the West Indies, and died there. She died soon after with some relations of his, and their only child, a boy, was, I have been told, drowned in the river that ran through the grounds of the house in which they had lived.' And this, my dear Silas, is the history of our loves. I have been happier in mine, it is true, than you. But who knows but what your trial was all for the best? I must now close this long letter, for the stock-yard is full, and we commence branding the young cattle. If ever you could make up your mind to pay this country a visit, it would well repay your trouble. To a sportsman like yourself I can say that though there are no foxes, yet an 'old man' kangaroo will show you good sport; and if we have no fences, there are fallen giants of the forest that will try your nerve and your nag's jumping powers. We all send you our loves, and believe me, my dear lad,

"Ever yours,

"ROBERT EVERSLEY."

Mr. Seedly folded the letter, tied it up in the bundle, and replaced them in the escritoire.

"That is plain enough, at any rate," said the little man. "The hand of Providence seems in it. If I *had* married my dear, he would have been my son. Now I have found him, I will be his father."

CHAPTER V.

When Mr. Seedly made up his mind as to his future relations with Tom, he was not long in putting matters straight, as he called it. The love he had felt for Clara Eversley had now descended to the lad, and he vowed for *her* sake, for her brother's sake, and for *his* sake, he would be a father to him. The only disappointment the little man experienced was that Tom was not a sportsman. "But we'll soon remedy that," he said. "He's bred right on both sides, and it will go hard with us if we do not soon teach him to tie and throw a fly, drop his birds right and left, and before two more seasons are over, to cross a country with the best of them. He's the very make for a horseman, and could ride under eleven stone with ease, and the mare will carry him beautifully."

So the little man made his appearance one afternoon in Hulme Terrace, and after calling on Mr. Drust, he took that gentleman with him on important business, first to his solicitor's and then to Mr. Maggs's.

"I'll have everything fair and square first," he said to Mr. Drust, as they turned the corner of Fountain Street. "I'll show them it is not a mere

passing fancy of mine, but that I mean what I say. I've neither kith nor kin in the world, Ishmael, and when *I* go, Tom shall come into all I have."

"Then you intend making your will now, I suppose, Silas?" said Mr. Drust.

"Yes; that is what I want you at my solicitor's for," the little man answered. "I have never made a will yet, because I've always had tolerably good health, and then, as I had no blood relations, I didn't care who came after me. In truth, I thought little about it. But life is uncertain, and I never knew anyone die the sooner for having put their affairs in order yet, though I know many who have a mortal dread of doing it. I'm not one of that sort, however. I shall leave Tom everything but a few legacies. And," continued the little man in an undertone to himself, "who knows! if I should meet *her there*, perhaps *she* will know that for *her* dear sake I supplied a father's place to her child."

Mr. Seedly's solicitor prepared a draft of the will, and the two old friends walked back arm in arm to Hulme Terrace. In his door was standing Mr. Maggs in his shirt sleeves, although it was in the month of January, looking as rosy and fresh as cold water and unlimited soap could make him. The scrubbing-brush part of his ablutions had to be dispensed with now, as Sam had grown into a strong young fellow, and Mr. Maggs's skin, though tough enough, was not yet quite leather. When he saw Mr. Seedly and Mr. Drust his face brightened up, and giving his trousers a hitch and pulling in a hole in his belt—for Mr. Maggs, when in evening dress, abjured braces—he called out to Mrs. Maggs,

"Mother, put the kettle on; here's the little gentleman as we are always a-talking over. Get the tea made, a regular good 'un—a spoonful for each party 'ere present, and one for the pot. Now then!" he continued, seizing Mr. Seedly by the hand, and slapping him on the shoulder, "What cheer, matie, sir! However are you? Well, this is wery kind."

"First-rate for an old man, Mr. Maggs," the little man replied, laughing. "How do you find *yourself?*"

"That's a good un," said Mr. Maggs, poking the little man in the ribs with his horny hand. "Old, are you, matie? Well, you're young enough in your 'art, anyway. Are you on any more o' them little arrands of yours? Now give me your hand again, sir, and we'll have another good squeege." And Mr. Maggs began to work the hand he had in his up and down in the most hearty though tiring fashion, and finished off with a flourish of which the little man's shoulder reminded him many a day after.

"And how are *you*, sir?" he added, turning to Mr. Drust, after having wiped his smiling face with his shirt sleeve. "I 'ope I see *you* wery well."

"Quite well, Mr. Maggs," replied the old gentlemen, brushing the snuff from his shirt-front. "But are you going to let us stop here, and not ask us in? I thought you were more hospitable."

"So we are, sir!" Mr. Maggs said, holding the door in his hand. "We are allays hospital, I hope. But I'm on guard."

Then, putting his head inside the door, he whispered, loud enough to be heard at the end of the

terrace, "Mother, are you ready? I can't keep 'em out much longer."

"Half a minute, Samwel!" they heard Mrs. Maggs say. "Just half a minute longer. I can't make the bottom hook of my gown meet; I've got so lusty!"

"Never mind! turn your apron round behind," whispered Mr. Maggs. Then turning again to his visitors, he said mysteriously, while his eyes twinkled, "Mother's a bit undone, you see. She's been a polishing me up in the back kitchen, and the fewer gowns she has on for that job the better. And I must say 'tis a wery tight fit to make anything of a reasonable size meet about her now."

Just as Mr. Maggs had finished explaining to his visitors the state of undress in which his wife was when they came, that lady herself appeared at the door, her ruddy face all aglow with the exertion she had gone through, and smiling, asked the gentlemen whether they wouldn't come inside.

They said they would come inside. Mr. Seedly informed her, laughing, that he had come all the way from The Moat to come inside, and that, indeed, the journey had made him very hungry.

"Then you're just in time, sir, for we was about to have our tea," Mrs. Maggs said. "We haven't got much to offer you, but sich as it is you will do us proud."

"Wery well said, mother," Mr. Maggs observed, nodding approvingly. "There's a beefsteak which'll eat wery tender, having hung a fortnight and hammered with a rollin' pin, two dozen crumplets, a weal pie, and a spoonful of black for each

party 'ere present, and a spoonful of green for the pot."

"The prospect is splendid," said the little man, smiling. "Why, Mr. Maggs, you are like the rich man who fared sumptuously every day, and was clothed ——"

"Not in a check shirt, sir," interrupted Mr. Maggs. "That gentleman was wery dressy, or I'm mistaken. I must say I'm wery fond of a good kitchen. Most Lancashire lads are."

"I believe you speak the truth there. I hope I shall never fare worse than the operatives when the mills are at work," said Mr. Drust.

"If you never do, you'll fare purty tidy, sir," Mr. Maggs informed him. "Them mill hands are wery improvident though, I'm afeard. They goes about enjoyin' themselves two or three days most weeks, and live like game-cocks every day."

"*You* haven't much to complain of!" said the little man, watching the preparations for tea, and thinking how much better off was his friend Maggs than his poor friend the amiable and accomplished critic to the *Slasher* had been in his lifetime.

"No, indeed, sir!" Mr. Maggs replied. "It's the other way about. We've a wery great deal to be thankful for, and I 'umbly hope we are thankful. We try to be, anyhow, for our connection is first-rate—the best chimblies, in fact, in Salford and 'igher Broughton, and a good few up Pendleton way. Trade is allays brisk, especially in winter, and I can make my four or five pound a week easy. The perfession ain't a bad 'un by no means."

"I daresay you deserve it," said the little man.

"Well, I dessay we do," Mr. Maggs replied; "but I know, matie, what you're a-driving at. You're a thinking about the soot. That isn't so bad as some think. They tell me it's wery healthy. I've no fault to find with it. And there's dirty work in other perfessions."

"Gad! that's true," said the little man, eyeing with satisfaction the juicy steak Mrs. Maggs was placing on the table. "All of us must have our working clothes on sometimes."

"And there's some perfessional gentlemen as can't get the soot off their hands, let 'em rub and scrub ever so," Mr. Maggs replied, smiling. "An' there's worse soot than chimbly soot."

"Never mind the soot!" said Mrs. Maggs at this moment. "I can always get that off you, Samwel, with plenty of soap and water."

"It never sticks, does it, mother?" said Mr. Maggs, laughing.

"Never!" answered his wife, "I will say that. Now, won't you draw up, sir, and Mr. Drust?"

They drew their chairs to the table, and Mr. Maggs having been asked by his wife if he wouldn't put his coat on, and having replied that, with a view to greater freedom of action in using his knife and fork, he would prefer, if agreeable to all present, to keep it off, they commenced their attack in good earnest.

"Is your tea to your liking, sir?" inquired Mrs. Maggs. "If it isn't sweet enough, perhaps you'll sugar and milk it yourself."

"It's beautiful!" said the little man. "Delicious! isn't it, Ishmael?"

Ishmael declared it was, and Mrs. Maggs, highly gratified, beamed on all of them.

"Try a few crumplets, sir," Mr. Maggs said, passing Mr. Seedly the plate which held those indigestible articles. "People says as how they're wery nice."

"Don't *you* take any?" inquired the little man.

"I can't exac'ly say as I do," Mr. Maggs replied. "They give me sich rum fancies. If ever I eat one of 'em, I feel as if I'm a biting up my flannel shirt, and that's the truth. Our Sam and Tom are wery fond of 'em."

"Sam and Tom have to be very thankful to you, sir, for the very 'andsome presents as you give 'em," Mrs. Maggs said. "Our Sam *is such* a swell, and goes about everywhere a-showing off your pin. And Tom wears the watch, and is allays a-looking to see what time it is."

"I'm glad," said the little man, blushing, "they are pleased. It was but a small acknowledgment, after all, Mrs. Maggs. Where are they now?"

"Oh, they said as they was a-going to take Miss Mary Ann to a fine art exhibition," Mr. Maggs informed them.

"I was not aware there was one open at present," said Mr. Drust.

"Their fine art exhibition," Mr. Maggs answered (and he used the words with immense pride) "is open every day, and a wery cheap one too. They go from Lomax's to Agnew's, and from Agnew's to Lomax's, and see the picters in the winder. There are some wery nice picters there sometimes. I wery often rub my own nose again' them winders; and

there's a nice looking-glass in one of them, at the corner of Princes Street, which is wery attractive, especially to young folks as thinks they're not bad-looking."

"I did not know they were so fond of the fine arts," Mr. Drust remarked. "I know Mr. Lomax, and I'll take them some day, and I daresay he'll let us see what he has inside."

"They'll be wery pleased, surely," Mr. Maggs answered, "and it's wery good of you. But you've got a 'art, that's about what you have. Lomax's is the favourite, but sometimes Tom takes 'em off to Market Street, where there's another picter-shop which is mostly sportin'."

"Sporting pictures, eh?" said the little man, delightedly. "I was sure of it. It's bred in him, sir."

"Certain'y," Mr. Maggs replied. "Tom is wery fond of them picters, especially the hosses."

"I was sure of it!" said the little man. "And that brings me to speak of my errand here to-night. Mr. Maggs, you can't keep Tom for ever, you know."

Mr. Maggs was in the act of carrying his cup to his lips, but he replaced it untouched, and after looking at the little man for a moment, he replied, "That depends, matie. If so be Tom likes to stop, he'll stop. If so be a sitivation is open to Tom, Tom will consider what that sitivation is like. If so be that sitivation is likely to suit, why, matie, I'll not stand in his way, nor mother, nor Sam. We'll put our feelins under lock and key, and say, smilin'—though, if we lose him, our

'arts will be wery sore and sad—we'll say, 'Tom, here's a sitivation open to you as'll suit. You've proved yourself a man in danger as 'ud turn many a bigger feller pale, and has a right to decide, allays mindin' to keep your weather eye open. Is it right you are, or is it not right you are? That's what we'll say. Do I say true, mother, or do I not say true?"

"You say true, Samwel," Mrs. Maggs replied, wiping her eye with the corner of the table-cloth.

"Wery well, then!" continued Mr. Maggs. "If so be he says it won't suit, this ere sitivation you mentions, then he stops in Hulme Terrace until summut better turns up. If so be summut better don't turn up, then, as Sam is gone in for 'igh art, Tom shall have the business, and make his five pound a week like a man. Do I say true, or do I not say true, mother?"

"You say true, Samwel," Mrs. Maggs answered.

"Wery well, then! What next, matie?" continued Mr. Maggs. "If so be you knows of a sitivation as you think 'll suit our Tom, speak up and don't be afeard, and I'll take it kindly of you. We are brothers all, aren't we? Wery well, then! Brothers all it is."

The little man sat rubbing his hands on his knees as though he wanted to polish his trousers, regarding Mr. Maggs with profound admiration. When that worthy had finished speaking, he said, "Bravo, Maggs! Good, Maggs! Well done, Maggs. I'll beat you, though."

"Start fair, matie!" said Mr. Maggs, becoming excited.

"I will," replied the little man.

"Fair an' square!" said Mr. Maggs.

"I will!" the little man exclaimed.

"Out with it, then, matie!" Mr. Maggs said, striking the table with his hand. "Suspense is wery bad for old 'uns like you and me. Out with it, sir, and let me down easy!"

"I'm an unmarried man!" said Mr. Seedly.

"And a bachelor!" Mr. Maggs remarked.

"And a bachelor!" continued the little man. "And an unmarried man and a bachelor I shall remain. I've neither kith nor kin. At any rate, none nearer than Tom. He saved my life at the risk of his own."

"He did!" said Mr. Maggs. "And wery nigh gone both of you was."

"We were, or at any rate *I* was," the little man said. "Now, Mr. Maggs, I've a fancy, or call it what you will——"

"A presentment," interrupted Mr. Maggs.

"Well, a presentiment," continued the little man, "that Tom is the nearest relative, as he certainly has become the dearest I have in the world."

"A niece, uncle, nephy, or aunt?" said Mr. Maggs, in a great state of excitement.

"We'll say a nephew!" the little man replied. "Tom, then, being my nephew, it is my intention if he is agreeable, to adopt him as such, and make him my heir, and when I die to leave him all I have. There now! will that situation suit him, do you think?"

Mr. Maggs sprang to his feet, his eyes flashing with excitement. He looked from one to another

of them, and then said to Mr. Seedly quietly, but in a manner that showed how much it cost him to suppress his feelings, "Matie! I'm a plain man, and we're all fair an' square here. Are you humbugging me? If you are, say so, and let's laugh it out."

"There is no humbug about it," the little man gravely replied. "I'm in earnest, and I have already made a will, or at least the draft is prepared, by which I leave Tom everything."

"Then hurroar!" shouted Mr. Maggs. "Hurroar, mother! you was right, ole girl. My word, but this ere is a sitivation!"

"But our Tom will be taken from us, Samwel," said Mrs. Maggs, quietly, while the tears sprang to her eyes. "He's been like our own for many a long year, and 'twill be hard to lose him."

Her husband's face fell immediately, and a wistful look stole over it like a shadow. After a moment's pause he said, "Wery true, mother. They'll take him from us, but they won't take his 'art from his old shop. In the days of his prosperity he'll be mindful of the old 'uns who nussed him and watched over him in times gone by, I'll warrant. Won't he, ole woman?" And he looked at his wife as though he should feel obliged to her or anyone else who would back him up in his opinion.

"Never fear!" said Mr. Drust, as he took snuff, "Tom is not the lad to forget the hand that fed him."

"Don't put it in that way, sir," Mr. Maggs said, with a pleading look on his face, which was in

strong contrast to that triumphant look which was there but a minute ago. "Gratitude is wery good, but it aren't *that* I should hope is between Tom and we. If he didn't love mother here, and our Sam, I should be wery much put out, for in his 'art we 'ope to live allays fresh and allays green. I don't think, when it comes to the push, as our Sam is much nearer and consekently much dearer to us than our Tom. He's been a second son to mother and me, and a wery good brother to Sam. All the pleasantest little affairs of his life, which has been summut wariable, was in *this* house. In our front bedroom mother nussed him when Sam and me brought him 'ere. In the back bedroom, next to the rafters, which is airy though watertight, he had the measles. On our front doorstep he first had the pleasure of readin' the Book of Martyrs, and it was out o' this house he went the night as he fetched *you* all drownded and limp out o' the river. There, matie! them's the feelins of mother's 'art which beats within her busk, an' mine which is ditto. An' if I thought as Tom's 'art wasn't in Hulme Terrace, and Hulme Terrace in Tom's 'art, I should be wery, wery upset."

"He'll never forget you," the little man said. "If Tom forgets his old friends, or if change of prospect alters him in the least, I shall be as disappointed as you yourself, Mr. Maggs."

"I dunno we ought to wonder if so be he should," Mr. Maggs replied, reflectively. "The lad is wery young, and young fellers are wery open to impressions. Everything will be new to him, and what with his gold watch and chain, and his dogs and

hosses, and going 'ere and going there, and other faces, maybe purty ones—though there's none purtier than one I can find next door—he *might* forget us for a time."

"I don't believe he ever will," said the little man. "I know his breeding. They're game, and as good to have by you at a pinch as they're awkward the other way. I'll warrant Tom will always stick to his friends."

"I'm wery glad you think so, sir," Mr. Maggs replied. "It's brothers all at this 'ere present time, and I 'ope it'll continue brothers all till futur years do roll away."

"Now then, my good Maggs," said Mr. Seedly, rubbing his hands and looking pleased, "do you think the situation will suit?"

"For myself, I should say, yes; wery good indeed," Mr. Maggs answered. "For Tom, I will not answer. He shall choose hisself."

"I should think there can be but one opinion about it," Mr. Drust remarked. "The lad is bound to go out into the world some time, and it would be the act of an idiot to refuse the offer made him."

Mr. Maggs shaved his chin carefully with his hand, and after pondering a moment, ventured to say "he thought so too."

"There must be no sentiment about it, if you would spare your feelings," continued the old gentleman. "If you look at it simply as going into a situation, it will be easy enough. If you regard it, as 'pon my word you have been doing, in a sentimental point of view, both you and Tom will

feel it very hard to part now or at any other time. Put sentiment on one side."

"But sentiment is very nice," Mrs. Maggs remarked.

"So it is, mother," said Mr. Maggs. "I don't mind a bit myself sometimes. It shows as you have a 'art."

"But in looking at the matter from a sentimental point of view, you will not only cause yourselves some unhappiness, but also Tom and Sam," argued the old gentleman. "Just say, 'Tom, this gentleman believes he is your uncle. You also saved his life. There are therefore two ties between you, relationship and services rendered. He wishes to adopt you as his son, and I say accept it. It will be a very comfortable situation.'"

"I believe you are right," said Mr. Maggs. "If so be Tom goes, as I dessay he will—indeed 'twould be wery queer if he wouldn't—he'll carry mother's blessing an' mine with him."

"An' if he won't go, which isn't wery likely, for as you say Tom don't look like a fool ——"

"Wild 'orses shan't pull him," interrupted Mrs. Maggs, determinedly.

"They shan't, mother; but I don't think as Tom 'll give 'em a chance," said Mr. Maggs; "and unless I'm wery much mistaken, they're outside this wery minute, and we shall soon know all about it."

As Mr. Maggs spoke, Sam and Tom and Marion entered the room, laughing and talking and quarrelling. "Come, mother!" said Sam, "give us some-

thing to eat, for we are starving. All our money went in oysters by three o'clock, and we've been wandering from St. Ann's Square to the corner of Princes Street ever since, hungry and footsore. Polly, put the kettle on," and he made a pirouette, and looked rather taken aback. "I beg your pardon," he said. "I did not know you were here."

"I'm glad to see you both," said the little man. "And this young lady! I need not ask how *you* are, my dear! you are charming."

"Too much so! alas!" said Sam, half in earnest and half in fun. "Tom, what time is it by your gold watch and chain?"

In a moment Tom's watch was in his hand, and after intense calculation, he informed Sam it was a quarter-past seven.

"Thank you!" said Sam; and turning to his mother he inquired in a loud whisper, "Mother! how do you like my necktie?"

"Very well, Sam. It's only the old un new done up, but the pin is beautiful," his mother replied.

"Thank you," said Sam, arranging his scarf. "I think I set it off to the best advantage." And he sat down and watched his shadow on the wall, posing himself with considerable effect for that purpose.

After a few moments Mr. Maggs cleared his throat, and said, "I can't keep it in any longer. I'm wery sorry if anybody here is disappinted, but I can't help it. Tom, do you want a sitivation?"

"Yes," replied Tom. "I want one very badly."

"Would a sitivation," continued Mr. Maggs, becoming excited by degrees and gradually raising his voice, "as a adopted son or nephey in a nice house in the country to a single unmarried bachelor, with the use of carriage and pianer, suit?"

Tom looked at Mr. Maggs and then at Mr. Seedly in perplexity. "I—I don't know what you mean," he said.

"Here, Tom, my boy! I'll tell you," said the little man, jumping up, and pushing Mr. Maggs into his chair. "I'm your uncle, Tom! your aunt, your grandfather; anything you like, my boy, and you'll come with me home, and be as my son, and I'll be to you as a father. Say you'll come, Tom! say you'll come."

Tom was sitting pale, and dazed. He could not understand them. He first thought them mad, and then supposed they had been drinking. He looked at Mr. Drust, who seemed the most sane, and inquired by a look what it all meant.

"It's true, Tom," said the old gentleman. "We've settled it all for you. You are Mr. Seedly's adopted son and heir."

The lad looked from one to another there, and wetted his dry lips with his tongue. "This—this is so very—so very——" Then catching sight of Mrs. Maggs's loving glance, which had rested on him ever since he had entered, he caught her in his arms. "Mother! mother!" was all he said.

"He's true," shouted Mr. Maggs. "Hurroar! We said he was true, and true he is!"

"Where is Marion?" inquired Tom, when the excitement had toned down.

That young lady had left the house unnoticed in the confusion, and at that moment was in her own room, undergoing the sweetest tortures. "He will leave us," she said to herself. "And praps forget us. But I do love him. I do love him."

CHAPTER VI.

The village of Chirkwell is only three miles from The Moat. It is a pretty village, full of picturesque cottages, covered with creepers, with gardens of roses, hollyhocks, pansies, tulips, cabbages, and other vegetables, combining in a remarkable degree the useful and the beautiful—affording food both for the cottagers and the innumerable bees whose hives stood in front of the cottage windows. One of these cottages was *The* Cottage, of Chirkwell. Had it stood in the suburbs of a town it would have been called a villa. There was a coach-house and stable behind, and a small lawn in front, that ran down to the brook, which followed its way purling and rippling through the village. A well-grown ivy covered the front of the cottage on one side of the door, and a climbing rose embowered the drawing-room windows on the other.

At the moment of which we write, two ladies were seated in the drawing-room, the windows of which were open, for it was now in June. The elder of the two, a short, swarthy little woman, of about fifty years of age, with black eyes and heavy brows, was engaged in cutting out a queer little garment, which was probably intended for some cottager's

child. The younger, who might have been half the other's age, had the same eyes and brows, but her colour was of a richer tone. She was taller too, though inclined to *embonpoint*, and would at any time have been pronounced a good-looking girl.

At length the elder lady folded up her work, replaced it in the small basket which stood on the table, and after walking to the open window and looking out on the lawn, turned towards her companion, and said, "Constance, how old are you?"

The younger lady put her tatting on her lap, and looking up, replied, "Why, mamma, what a question! Surely no one knows better, or as well as you do yourself, seeing you must have been present when I was born."

"That is nothing to the purpose child," said the elder lady. "I don't inquire for my own information, but I should like to find out whether you know yourself."

"Well, mamma," Constance replied, yawning, "sometimes I *feel* about sixteen, but at present I feel as if I were a hundred."

"Indeed, Miss Revell!" said mamma, colouring, and losing sight for the moment of the original question, "and may I ask what makes you feel so old to-day?"

"Certainly!" that lady's daughter replied, looking her mamma straight in the face, for these little passages of arms were not uncommon between them, and mamma was, it must be confessed, somewhat in awe of her daughter, who, when she chose, had what in less refined circles is called a tongue and a temper. "I feel tired; this place is wearying in

the extreme. There's no one in the village to speak to, and we've had no callers, nor have we been out for the last two days."

"If you are so much in want of company, the rectory is not far off, and Mrs. Prinsep is generally at home. Besides, the walk would do you good, for you are growing stout," mamma said quietly.

Constance *was* growing stout—stouter indeed than young ladies usually care to be, as she knew well enough, if the evidence of her dresses and corset was worth anything. It was a very passable thrust on mamma's part, and deserved one in return that should draw blood. So she replied, demurely enough, "Very true, mamma. You yourself, I've heard, were never considered slim, and I suppose it's in the family. Besides that, I don't care to see so very much of Mrs. Prinsep, not having inherited the taste for scandal. She's more in your line, mamma."

"You were of a different opinion, Constance, when her brother was stopping there, if I remember rightly," said mamma, casting a sharp glance at her daughter.

The colour rose to Constance's face, and tinged her ears with red. Mamma had hit her hard that time. She bit her lip, and worked away in the most assiduous manner for two minutes. At the end of that time, having rallied her forces, she replied, "Well, mamma! no one knows about those things better than you. *You* should be able to judge of them if anybody can, for you've had some experience yourself, even since papa died."

"Constance!" said Mrs. Revell, colouring brick-

red, and looking anything but motherly at her daughter. "How dare you!"

"Mamma!" Constance replied quietly, for she now had the whip hand of her mother and would keep it, as that lady knew well enough. "Don't get in a temper. Your complexion, which is never at any time *very* good, really becomes dreadful when you get excited, and at *your* time of life you should be careful. Besides, you should recollect that little story about people who live in glass houses, you know."

"I can only recollect that I have a most disobedient daughter," said Mrs. Revell. "And that she is quite *old* enough to know better." There was considerable emphasis on the word "old."

"Now, mamma, don't!" Constance said, unwinding a considerable amount of cotton. "I wouldn't pursue the conversation if I were you in your present excited state. You know you *are* excited."

Mrs. Revell made a gesture of impatience with her hand, and looked as though she would not only like to say something sharp, but to give her daughter a good shaking. But she took the advice nevertheless, and sat looking out of the window in silence for about a quarter of an hour.

Presently she turned towards her daughter and said, "You have not yet answered my question, Constance. Do you know how old you are?"

"Really, mamma, I forget," Constance replied. "I was nineteen last year, when that man brought the census papers, and I recollect *you* were nine and thirty at the same time. But as to my age at the present moment, I suppose I must be twelve months older than I was a year ago."

"It is absurd talking after this fashion," Mrs. Revell said. "I really believe, from the way in which you go on, you forget your age. If you had been baptised in *this* parish, you would be a middle-aged woman, my dear. Luckily you were not, and so can regulate your age. You are eight-and-twenty."

"Really! am I indeed?" Constance replied. "Well, mamma, if you stated *your* age correctly last year you must have been married to papa when you were eleven, and as you were engaged to him five years, you could only have been six when he proposed to you. Indeed, I think I can be but twenty at the most."

"It is nonsense talking like this between you and me, Constance. It is worse—it is suicidal," said Mrs. Revell. "However much we deceive the men, and even them we can't deceive beyond a certain time without taking up new ground, it is useless trying to deceive ourselves. You may pass for twenty with those who don't know you, but *we* know how old you are, and in another two years you'll be out of the hunt, as I've heard you remark in reference to other pursuits. It is time, Constance, you were married."

"I am quite agreeable, mamma!" Constance yawned.

"I shouldn't have thought it," her mother said. "Had you really meant it, you ought to have been married years ago. There are hundreds of girls going off every day, who have not half your looks, and without having been blessed with a tenth of your advantages. The money I've spent in dining people

for the sake of bringing their brothers or sons in your way, and the schemes and plans I've worried myself with, and the humiliation I have put up with, all towards the same end, have been beyond everything. But there is an end to most things, and unless you play a better game, you will be on the shelf. I believe good cards are thrown away on you, for when you came out you held a whole suit trumps and never scored a trick."

"Excuse me, mamma!" Constance answered, losing a shade or so of colour as she spoke. "I should have scored a trick had I not left it to you."

"It is no use playing the ace of trumps when the knave will do," said Mrs. Revell.

"And you played the knave and lost," Constance replied.

"It doesn't matter now," Mrs. Revell said, rather nervously. "The man was in trade."

Constance gave her mother a peculiar look, but whether of scorn, anger, or pity, or whether of all three, it is impossible to say. "Mamma," she answered, after a moment's pause, without removing her eyes from her, "*you* are talking absurdly now. We are not in front of the foot-lights, and there's nobody here, so pray don't begin to marchioness and baroness *me*. The man was in trade, was he? And so was papa, and I've heard that *your* papa was nothing more aristocratic than a builder. The man, even though he was in trade, could at this moment buy up all the titled people you or I know, and he sits in Parliament. And had it not been for your scheming and planning, we both of us might be

moving in better society than we do or ever shall move in."

"Your grandpapa was an architect, and your papa a merchant," said mamma, in a great state of nervousness. "And I beg you'll drop the subject."

"Grandpapa began as a mason's boy, and papa kept a shop, at any rate," Constance remarked.

"Constance, you are cruel," mamma said, covering her eyes with her handkerchief. "As if I could help it."

"Mamma!" replied Constance, "I don't wish to be cruel, but you are unjust and absurd. It is useless to talk as we have been doing. You are anxious to get rid of me, and I for my part should have no objection to anything like a decent establishment."

"You know," mamma weeps, "it is for *your* good I am anxious. If I should die, and the youngest of us are liable to—though it's a great shame, I would say, if it were not slightly profane—what would you do? There's the thousand pounds, and that is all you have, though I've hinted to everyone it is ten. My income is derived from my annuity, and it dies with me. So unless you marry, you'll have to go out as a governess."

"I have always heard that a governess has a harder time of it than a housemaid, but I don't know that I should regret so very much trying it," Constance said. "I don't suppose that any particular walk in life is strewn with *nothing* but roses. I know I am heartily sick and weary of the life *we* lead very often, mamma, and would marry any man who asked me."

"You talk like a fool, Constance," mamma replied.

"It's all very fine to say *you* are tired of it, but what must it be for *me*? Do you think *I* have no trials?"

"Indeed, mamma, you have," Constance said. "It must be a bitter trial for you, after getting a lot of people here, and scouring the country all over, to see me hang on your hands still. But when I have seen you praising me to the men—and you know you do—and heard you hinting at the fortune I am to have, I have felt that I was no better than a horse or any other animal in the market, and I've hated you, myself, and everybody else. There!"

"You add ingratitude to your other bad qualities," Mrs. Revell replied. "You know I do all these things, and undergo all this humiliation, to see you established, and this is the way I am thanked. I've no patience with you. After the years of patient training I have given you, you still talk and think like a girl fresh from school. What right have you to feel put out? What right have you to resent the humiliations most women who are in the market have to put up with? You should wait, as any clever woman would, until you are married. If you feel sore on account of the social position we women occupy, you can take it out of your husband, and welcome. But you'll never solve *that* problem, my dear."

"What problem, mamma?" Constance inquired.

"The problem of women's rights—women's fiddlesticks!" Mrs. Revell replied. "I know you are sore and awkward because you have no independent career open to you, in which you can pick and choose. But you haven't, and never will have, for all Miss Becker and the rest of them. Your career

should be marriage; and, when you are married, you can easily make a summary of your rights. Women's rights are never, except in the most fortunate cases, gained until they are married. Their rights are to dress well, to have plenty of money, and never to be bothered or questioned by their husbands. And you would have gained them long ago, if you had been half as clever as you look."

"I would have gained them long ago, had you not interfered, mamma!" Constance said, speaking quickly, and somewhat harshly. Her brows were down over her eyes now, and a good deal of her colour had left her face, showing rather plainly a line or two about the corners of her mouth. "You made me break with the only man I ever cared about. And, even putting sentiment on one side, he would have turned out to be the most eligible party, even in your sense, that I have ever been introduced to."

"There is no use in referring to that now," Mrs. Revell answered. "Perhaps I made a mistake. If I did, it was unintentional, and I only had your welfare in view. But there have been plenty of others you could have laid yourself out for. There was Philip Gunnell—not that I think much of him, mind, for his father is not rich, and may live for ever."

"Philip is not a marrying man," Constance said.

"You should have made him one, then, for even he is better than none," Mrs. Revell informed her daughter.

"Now, mamma," Constance said, putting her work into her pocket, and hardening her heart, "let us

come to the point. You didn't commence this conversation without having some object in view. Let us hear what it is, and if it refers to my settlement in the happy state, I tell you again I am quite agreeable." The latter part of this was said with a good deal of scorn, which was evidently quite lost on the elder of the two ladies.

"I'm glad to hear you say so," Mrs. Revell replied. "It is some satisfaction that you are becoming sensible of the danger of putting off what we all look to as our mission. Did you notice any strangers at church on Sunday?"

"I can't say that I did," Constance answered. "You forget, mamma, I don't go to church to watch who are there, like most people. I had a very passable novel with me."

"And now, while you remind me of it, I wish to speak to you on that subject," Mrs. Revell said. "It is not often I ask you to do anything out of regard to *my* feelings, but I implore you to be less profane, or, at any rate, more devotional at church, where so many people can see you. Why will you expose the yellow covers of your novels during the service, when there are a beautiful Russian-leather pair, with a gilt cross, in the book-case, which were made for that purpose? and you can enjoy your reading and be religious at the same time. It is wicked to fly into the face of public opinion, when the reputation for being devotional is so fashionable and so easily acquired. You don't find me throwing away my chances like that. You know how I hate those hideous thick veils, and yet I never go to church without one in my pocket, which I can put on and

take off in the pew. I should never dream of sleeping under dear Mr. Prinsep's stirring sermons, without first covering my face with my veil. If I am not awake and hanging on every word he utters, it is only due to the sanctity of the place, and the feelings of the *other* worshippers, that I should be supposed to be doing so. And I beg and pray of you, Constance, in future carry your novel, or whatever you wish to read during divine worship, between the covers of a Church Service."

"Mamma," Constance said, looking at her mother, "I never seem to fathom you."

"My dear Constance, you are not the only one who has come to that conclusion," Mrs. Revell replied, with a smile that intimated her gratification at the remark.

"I did not mean it as a compliment," Constance remarked. "I was only wondering at your depth, your cun——"

"My resources, and knowledge of human nature, and the happy manner I have of adapting myself to the requirements of society," her mamma interrupted. "Quite true, Constance. But whether you meant it as a compliment or not, it *is* one. A clever woman will not brave Society. She will bow before it. Society, my child, is very powerful. It prohibits certain things. You will not do or say those things which are prohibited under the eyes of Society. But if you choose, you can do or say those things all the same, without letting Society see them or hear them, and you may be sure Society is doing and saying exactly the same things. There, my dear, is the whole duty of

woman—do and say whatever you like; but don't let Society see or hear you."

"I'm sick and tired of Society!" Constance remarked, pettishly. "That is, as *we* see it. I don't know what Society is among the upper ten; though if one were to believe all one hears from the people we meet, we might flatter ourselves we were moving in the most select circles. Scarcely a single person we meet but from their own account is descended from the Normans or some equally remote ancestry, and scarcely one of them would candidly own to their own grandfathers. It seems to me to be nothing but pretention and bombast."

"If Society is artificial, we can't help it," Mrs. Revell replied. "We don't make Society. We only take it as we find it. But what I wish to impress on you is that there are certain laws imposed by Society, and it is our duty to conform to those laws. And however much we may be inclined to condemn them, we cannot ignore them. It is in Society and Fashion that women rule. Some time ago, Fashion said that ladies should hunt. Very well, Constance. You hunted whenever I could persuade anyone to give you a mount, and uncommonly bad you rode. I can't say I admired Fashion then, for you never went out but I was in fear you would be killed, or at least dangerously hurt, and an expensive affair it would have been either way. Fortunately, sometimes, Fashion changes. It now says young ladies should be devotional, if not absolutely religious. It is therefore wicked not to conform to that law. I am not bigoted, I hope, Constance; but if you cannot occupy your thoughts in

church by studying the costumes that are around you, and endeavouring to show your own to the best advantage—and if you don't, I can't see the use of people dressing better on Sundays than on any other day—if you can't do this, and are too wakeful to sleep with the strictest propriety through those parts of the service where you are not required to stand, but *must* have a novel to read, I beg and request you will make that novel appear as much like a Prayer Book as a pair of covers will admit of, for Society demands it."

No reply being forthcoming from Constance, who was busily engaged in pulling a rose to pieces and blowing the leaves through the window, her mamma continued her homily.

"And now, while I am about it," continued that lady, "I must tell you that I do not think you treat the new curate with proper respect. Indeed, at times you are barely civil to him. I should have thought you would have known better than that."

"The man is a heap of priggishness," Constance replied, scattering the rose leaves more energetically than before. "He is conceited beyond endurance, and is not even decent looking."

"That does not matter," her mamma said. "He is well connected, and, at any rate, is quite good enough for practice. Besides that, it is the fashion to pet curates, and make much of them, and if you can make them believe they are the direct successors to the apostles—and it's not at all difficult, for men are the most credulous creatures in the world as to their own merits—so much the better. It would look nice, Constance, if you were to ask him for

advice as to some religious doubts; you can easily manufacture a few for the occasion, so as to create a confidence between you. Make him your spiritual adviser, child, and you will be none the worse for it. To say the least, it will be a study for you, and a study it is necessary you should pay attention to. At your time of life, dear, women are seldom married for their looks. There are younger and fresher women to be had for the asking, who are not so heavily handicapped with respect to age, as your papa used to say, and in that they have the advantage of you. Indeed, you begin to show signs of your years already, for I noticed just now, when you were out of temper, lines at the corners of your mouth and your eyes. When this is the case, there is only one other qualification, and that is money. I tried that for a long time, but I begin to be afraid it is of no use. It is just possible, when I hinted at ten thousand, they set it down at its proper value; and I've even heard of some of them going to a place called Doctors' Commons, where they can see anyone's will for a shilling. If anyone had gone there, and had inquired for your poor papa's, they would have seen your ten thousand was but one. So I'm afraid that's played out. There is one thing a clever woman *can* do; and that is, marry the man, instead of he marrying her. I've known it done many times, but only by women of ability. But there is even something required besides ability, and that is an intimate acquaintance with the workings of the male human heart. You must understand their weaknesses, their foibles, their likes, and their dislikes. When you can say

you have mastered these, I sometimes think it's a safer game than either good looks or money; for, if you take the trouble, you can keep them under your hand quite as much after marriage as before. When I see a husband of any standing over twelve months paying his wife those little attentions which are usually confined to the days of courtship, I always say that woman is a clever woman, and one who has made man a study. And in nine cases out of ten I am right. You may be as beautiful, my dear, as you like, and it will pall on your husband long before your roses have shown signs of fading. Indeed, I once heard the husband of a most beautiful woman say that he got through his wife's good looks before the honeymoon was over. And he was a most excellent husband, and extremely fond of her, too. And the less we say of the case of a woman married for her money the better. We all know what *that* means. But even when you become an adept at reading the male heart, you can't succeed with them all alike. The men who have cut their wisdom-teeth, and retained them, are extremely wary; and even when they appear on the point of taking the bait, draw off with all the honours of war. But *young* men who have not cut their wisdom-teeth, and *old* men who have lost theirs, are comparatively tame; the latter even more so than the former. It is for this reason I want you to pay more attention to Mr. Wheedle. He will afford you a subject to study and practise on. And when you have acquired the knowledge necessary to enable you to get on their weak sides, and the habit of professing the greatest interest in

their little nothings, their weak ambitions, their occupations, and their amusements, you will become the most fascinating of women in their eyes, and I shall have greater hopes of your establishing yourself well than I have ever had yet. And if you will take my advice, you will give the preference to an old rather than to a young man, for a variety of reasons too numerous, and, I may say, too apparent to particularise."

"Mamma, you are in great force to-day," Constance said, when her mother had ceased speaking. "It is a pity you were not a man. You would have made a figure as a fashionable preacher. But after all, I expect your sermon on the vanity of female beauty and riches, and the desirability of understanding the workings of that strange piece of anatomy called the human heart, is like a woman's letter; the whole body of it being nothing but padding, and the point left for the postscript! What is it you are leading up to?"

"I was in hopes you would have understood, from the question I asked you some little time ago," her mother replied.

"I really forget what it was!" Constance said. "Was it not something about somebody being in church last Sunday?"

"Yes! I was asking whether you noticed any strangers there?" Mrs. Revell answered.

"Really, I don't recollect," Constance said in the most indifferent manner. "I leave all those sort of things to you, mamma. Who was it?"

"Mr. Seedley, and a young fellow he calls his nephew; but how far that is to be believed I don't

know. I always understood he had no relatives," Mrs. Revell replied. "At any rate, he has returned to The Moat, after an absence of fifteen months, and brings this young fellow back with him, and intends I understand, to introduce him to the neighbourhood as his nephew and heir."

"And in what way does this affect us mamma, except that we shall have a tolerably pleasant neighbour again?" Constance asked, as she smothered a yawn.

"It affects us in this way," her mother replied. "Mr. Seedly is worth two thousand a year irrespective of The Moat, which is a nice little property. He is an easy-going man, and simple enough in all conscience. If you choose to benefit by what I've been telling you, you may perhaps become his wife, or if not his, there is the nephew to fall back on, and from his looks I should say he is both young and inexperienced. And mind, Constance, if you fail to bring either one or the other of these to book, I shall give you up. Why, I believe I could manage it *myself*, if I were to set about it. But if you will take my advice you'll go in for the uncle."

"It's no use, mamma! I've tried *that* already," Constance said demurely.

"Oh!" Constance's mamma replied, prolonging the ejaculation to its utmost limits. "You are deeper than I thought, child. However, if you have found that out, there's the nephew left. And we will open the campaign at once. Will you be good enough to ring the bell?"

"Tell Richard," she said to the servant who entered, "to bring round the carriage in half an hour.

And," continued that old soldier, when the servant had left the room, "I suppose you have no objection to offer, Constance?"

"None in the world, mamma," that young lady replied.

CHAPTER VII.

When it was decided that Tom should take up his residence at The Moat, in the character of the owner's heir and nephew, Mr. Seedly had determined that the lad should enter on this new phase of his life with all the advantages he could possible command. No one but himself was aware of the tie that bound the little man to Tom—an ever-green memory of a past love. Mr. Drust thought his friend's course of action was the result of an absorbing gratitude for his life; and as no one would be hurt by it, and Tom, of whom the old gentleman was fond, would be benefited, he warmly abetted the little man in his designs. The Maggses, however, were of opinion that there was a relationship between the two, and readily accepted Mr. Seedly's fiction as a fact, and implicitly believed that Tom was his nephew. Moreover, it was flattering to their perception, and verified their often expressed opinion, that "their Tom was somebody a peg or two above Hulme Terrace." As to Tom himself, he was utterly at a loss to what to ascribe the interest in him which Mr. Seedly showed. He had just sufficient recollection of his earlier years to recall the memory of an uncle who had told him he

was his heir, and he thought for a moment that this warm-hearted little man whom he had saved from the cold, rushing river, must in reality be that uncle. But then, as far as his memory served him, the uncle of his childhood was quite a different person from his newly-found relative. Then, again, he would assure himself that the relationship between them was an amiable fiction on the little man's part, and that his good fortune was to be ascribed only to the service he had rendered him under the bridge by the Old Bailey.

At first, Mr. Seedly intended to have brought Tom direct from Hulme Terrace to The Moat, and to have introduced him at once to all his friends and acquaintances as his nephew. But on further discussing the matter with himself, he came to the conclusion that this course would be unwise. In the first place, he thought, it will never do to bring the lad into a class of society of which he has had no experience; for however clever or well-bred he is, he cannot help committing many little solecisms which would make him the subject of remark among a lot of people who take more delight in pulling their neighbours to pieces than in acts of charity; and if he is to commit himself to any awkwardness, it is better he should do so where he will be unknown. Then, again, even should he escape remark as to his manner and bearing, a good many tongues will wag respecting the alleged relationship, and many ill-natured remarks are sure to be passed about both of us. We must manage to bring the lad forward with every probability of the relationship between us, and I think the best plan will be for us

to go away for a time, and give out that I am gone to bring home my nephew.

Having, therefore, laid his plans with considerable ability and knowledge of human nature, as he thought, Mr. Seedly and Tom took leave of their friends in Hulme Terrace, and proceeded to London, where they remained for some time. Here Tom was placed under the tuition of a well-known riding-master. "For," said the little man, "in a hunting country, such as you will for the future live in, Tom, providing you have a comfortable income, can ride straight to hounds, and are a sociable fellow, the chances are you will get on remarkably well. The last two qualifications will ensure you a welcome from the men, and the former—especially if you are decently good-looking—will make you a favourite with the women. So learn to ride well, Tom, and you will have it all your own way."

From London they proceeded to Ireland, and spent two months among the trout streams and lochs, the whole of the time being devoted to Tom's education in sport. For these pursuits he showed considerable aptitude, and by the end of August could throw a fly and land his fish in a sufficiently respectable manner, and sit a horse without being remarkable for the badness of his seat. Indeed, in this latter accomplishment he was more than respectable, his seat being firm, and not having to unlearn anything when he first attended the riding-school, he acquired what is known to hunting men as "good hands;" and Mr. Seedly was certain that by the time he should have hunted regularly for a season he would be very hard to beat. In Septem-

ber they proceeded to the Continent, and spent the winter and the following spring in wandering about from one city to another, and seeing all the sights that tourists should see, implicitly following the directions of Murray's handbook.

"It is the best school in the world, Tom," the little man assured him. "Maggs is the prince of good fellows, but he is not exactly calculated to fill the office of master of ceremonies. But here you have teachers on every side of you. Only keep your eyes open and observe the people around you, how they bear themselves at places of public amusement, at the *table d'hôte*, and other resorts, and you can't go far wrong. And remember, my lad, that a pleasing manner is really a good property. There's many a fellow makes a good living out of it. Don't imagine that I am so worldly as to wish you to regard it as so much capital to trade on, though there are many worse investments. It is a qualification, though, that increases, or rather enhances, your worth in society, and gives you a pull over other fellows who have taken no pains to cultivate it. It pleases your friends, and must, in the course of things, be a source of considerable pleasure to yourself. Moreover—and this is a reason I would always keep in my mind, if I were you, for though I am no miser, thank God, yet I think a man is a fool who *can* reap good returns without outlay, and *won't*—it costs *you* nothing. It is all the manner of doing or saying a thing. I've known many a good fellow always doing some one a good turn, but always doing it ungraciously. His *yes* was worse than many another man's *no*. And I've known many

another fellow who would turn you out of house and home with such a gracious air that you would think him the nicest fellow alive, and actually thank him for ruining you. A brusque manner, Tom, is a terrible penalty in the race, but it depends on yourself whether you will carry the weight or not, for in this particular every man is his own handicapper."

To a young fellow not an absolute fool, this advice must have been either in a greater or lesser degree beneficial. Tom was not a fool by any means. We shall not be guilty of an untruth if we say he was rather above than under the ordinary standard of ability. The time he had spent in the study of Mr. Drust had not been wasted, for when he ceased being under that gentleman's tuition, he could have taken his degree at Oxford or Cambridge with something to spare. It will not appear surprising, then, that when at the end of eighteen months' travel he returned home, he was quite presentable, and of more pleasing and polished manners than nine young men out of ten you meet in the country. During the whole time of his absence he had regularly written to his friends in Hulme Terrace, and he had hardly unpacked his portmanteau at The Moat before he rushed off to pay them a visit. Sam and Marion were both in London, but Mr. and Mrs. Maggs were there to welcome him, and declared "he was so growed as they shouldn't have knowed him;" and in describing their impressions afterwards to Mr. Drust, Mr. Maggs declared "he was quite the gent, and so *very* affable!" And Mrs. Maggs gave it as her opinion that "he was very 'andsome, and that

moustachers, though small, suited him, and that as to being affable, she thanked God she didn't know much about that, but that he was affectionate she would say, and stand to it to the last breath in her body!"

"It is so wery kind of you to come! so wery affable and perlite," Mr. Maggs said. "Won't you sit down, sir?"

"Why, Mr. Maggs," Tom said, turning scarlet, "what is the matter with you? What have I done that you should speak to me like that?"

"Well, you know, you're a gentleman now," Mr. Maggs replied, nervously, and feeling very much the same as if Tom had been his own son, but had been removed by some freak of fortune out of the range of natural affection. He was longing to slap him on the back and call him Tom, but he was uncertain whether he should be right in resuming the old intercourse.

"Mother!" Tom said, turning to Mrs. Maggs, "*you* won't speak to me like that, I know. Here is father almost disowning me."

"That I won't, my dear," Mrs. Maggs replied, as she threw her arms round the lad's neck. "I won't! I won't! I won't! He's our own boy, Samwel."

"By Gor! I believe he is," said Mr. Maggs, smiling, and holding his head on one side as though to get a better view of him. "Is it 'Tom,' or isn't it?"

"It is, and nothing else," Tom replied, keeping his arm around the voluminous waist of Mrs. Maggs.

"Is it brothers all, matie, or isn't it?" inquired Mr. Maggs.

"Brothers all it is," replied Tom, who immediately fell into Mr. Maggs's way of conversation.

"What cheer, then, Tom?" said Mr. Maggs, bringing down his hand with a ringing slap between Tom's shoulders. "Your 'and, Tom, in mine, and we'll squeege wery hard, a regular buster and no mistake, for the sake of the days as is gone by."

"And for the sake of those to come," said Tom, grasping the honest little man's hand in his.

"Tom is *our* Tom as he used to be," Mrs. Maggs remarked. "He's growed taller, and bigger about the shoulders; his moustachers though little is becoming; and his clothes is quite the thing. But his 'art, Samwel, is all right and in Hulme Terrace, though I say it who shouldn't, and I'll stand to my words before all the judges in the land."

"My good fortune in meeting with such a friend as Mr. Seedly cannot alter my feelings to any *here*," Tom replied, earnestly. "You are still to me my father and my mother, and my affectionate gratitude to you never has, never will, never can diminish."

It will be seen from this that Tom was not spoiled. His good fortune had not turned his head, and he still had a place in his heart for those who showed him such love and kindness in the old time when he was houseless, homeless, and a wanderer.

On the same morning the conversation between Mrs. Revell and her daughter, which was related in the last chapter, took place, Tom and Mr. Seedly were sitting in the little room at The Moat which Mrs. Bickley termed the library, and Mr. Seedly

"the den." Both of them thought they had reason on their side in naming it, for there was a tolerably fair collection of books on the shelves, the newspapers and magazines lay on the table, and gun racks, shot belts, fishing rods, hunting crops, a spare saddle, an odd stirrup iron, and numerous other odds and ends were hanging on the walls or stood in the corners. A box of cigars lay open on the table, and a fox-terrier bitch and a litter of pups were enjoying themselves on the hearthrug.

Mr. Seedly was sitting at the library table busily engaged in tying flies, while Tom sat at the open window with a meerschaum pipe, tolerably brown, in his mouth, making a stretcher of fine-drawn gut.

Presently Mr. Seedly, having finished dressing a Marlow-Buz, looked up at the young fellow at the window. Never, he thought, had he seen such a striking resemblance between two people as the lad bore to his uncle, Mr. Robert Eversley. He had grown more manly, and thicker and taller. His face was tanned with the sun, and a silken moustache just shaded the upper lip; the rest of his face was as smooth and bare as a girl's. He was barely twenty, and carried but little flesh, "and yet," thought the little man, "the mare will not be up to his weight next season, to carry him as I should *like* him to be carried. He ought to ride a stone in hand, and he'll walk twelve stone if he's a pound." Indeed, he was a fine strapping young fellow, quite as tall as Mr. Eversley, and promised in time to be as muscular; and to intensify the likeness, there would come over his face at times, like a flash, that

look of indomitable resolution which so characterised his uncle.

"Tom," the little man said, "I'm getting too old and shaky to tie anything like a good fly. I wish you could manage it. It's half the pleasure, or rather it doubles the pleasure, of making a good basket when you can say you not only caught them by fair fishing, but also tied the flies that rose them."

Tom took his pipe from his mouth, and looking across at the little man, said with a pleasant laugh, "I'm afraid I'm too old to begin now. Fly-making, uncle, is like playing the piano—you must begin young, and before your fingers stiffen, to do anything at it. *My* imitations would scarcely deceive the most innocent trout, and it's much cheaper to pay Jones of Ludlow two shillings a dozen for a first class lot, than to spend a lot of money in materials and turn out a miserable article after all. I make my own stretchers, and I can throw a fly decently, but I began too late in the day for anything else."

"You're only a fair performer at the craft, after all, Tom," the little man observed. "You want more practice, but that will come in time. Rome wasn't built in a day. You should have seen Bob Eversley, though! He had the lightest hand on a rod *and* on a bridle that *I* ever saw. *You* think you've not done badly when you've landed a pounder with a stretcher of fine-drawn gut, and I grant you 'tis not everyone would do it. But I've seen Bob land a three-and-a-half-pounder as strong as a salmon, with a stretcher eleven feet long of the *finest* of drawn gut."

"There are not many three-pounders to be heard

of now, I fancy," Tom replied. "At least, I've never *seen* any."

"You are mistaken there," the little man said, while his eyes twinkled with fun. "You may *hear* of them any day in the week, though I grant you, you may wait a long time before you *see* one. Talk to any man you may chance to meet by the river-bank, go into the snuggery of any fishing inn in the country, and I'll lay the best trout-rod that ever came out of Little's shop to a hazel stick, you'll hear of three and four pounders, and maybe, bigger fish still. A man never loses a minnow, but it is a pound-and-a-half trout. If by his own clumsiness his stretcher breaks, and a fish that would barely turn the scale at a pound carries off a cast of flies, he at once declares it to have been a three or four pounder, and before the week is out, he will be prepared to swear it was even more. You may talk of the jealousy of hunting men—and *I'm* not going to deny there is a good deal of it—but the jealousy of fishermen beats it hollow. I've known a fellow, and a good fellow too, after taking his three brace in the day, pack his wading stockings in his basket, place his fish on the top, and swear he had filled his creel. It is becoming the fashion now to keep a diary of what you've done with the rod, and write accounts of your extraordinary sport to the *Field*. I should only like to know how many of these diaries are filled with fictitious catches, and how much of the sport recorded in the letters was had on the streams, and how much in the imagination but of the writer. If we could but obtain that information, believe me, Tom, 'twould be very curious reading."

"I suppose there is jealousy in everything where there's emulation," Tom said.

"I daresay there is," the little man replied. "But I confine myself entirely to sport, where your success or failure can neither benefit nor hurt anyone. There's Colburn, who lives over at The Lodge, to instance another sport. The fellow has the reputation of being a first-rate shot, and yet he'll never fire a gun in company after luncheon. At first sight you may think he gets tired, or has had enough of it. But it can't be that, for he can do his forty miles a day, and plods after the birds, *when alone*, from breakfast-time till sunset. It's nothing but jealousy, Tom," the little man continued, chuckling, "and I've told him so. He is as jealous of his reputation as a woman. And you'll see in September, there is a change for the worse in the shooting after you've washed down a considerable share of cold pie with a fair allowance of claret."

"Your friend at The Lodge must be a man of great firmness," Tom said, as he wound the stretcher, which was now complete, round his hat. "If he is fond of the sport—and I imagine he must be to plod all day *alone* after the birds—it must cost him a considerable amount of self-denial to give over at two o'clock.

"And so it does," the little man replied. "I've seen him tear himself away from a well-stocked manor, after he had lunched, with tears in his eyes, and I'll venture to say on every such occasion he was miserable for the rest of the day. When they get off the ground and hear the guns popping, they think what they *might have done* had they

remained, and it has often cost Colburn a severe struggle not to go back and rejoin them. Whatever you do, Tom, avoid making a reputation; for if you make one and fail to keep it, you'll be fifty times worse off than if you never had any. Some one wrote about a fellow 'seeking the bubble reputation at the cannon's mouth.' Whoever he was I'll warrant he felt it a deal harder task to keep up his reputation than he did to acquire it. It leads you into all sorts of things. You tell stories until you believe them; you undergo tortures a Red Indian would groan under; you perform acts of self-denial your soul abhors, and altogether it leads you a devil of a life. I once knew a hunting man—and my experience of sportsmen has been of that class rather than of any other—who underwent the greatest privations to keep up his reputation as a hard man across country. There is no doubt he was a good performer, and would select his own line, and keep it from the time the fox broke cover till the hounds ran into him, and many a time I've seen him lead a field of hard men. Well, mark his history, and let it point a moral. That man was as fond of tobacco as you are, and yet from November till April he would never touch a pipe or cigar. He regularly drank his pint of sherry at dinner all through the summer months, but restricted himself to one, or two glasses at most, when the season commenced. He was as fond of a ripe Stilton as any man I ever met; but when the frosts of autumn came, the cheese was seen no more. He took great delight in a rubber of whist; but four honours would not keep him out of bed after ten o'clock if the hounds were to meet the next morning.

He mortally offended his uncle, from whom he had expectations, by refusing to break through his rule as to wine—the old gentleman being under the impression his abstinence was the result of an opinion that the wine was corked—and he never forgave him.

"Now mark the end of it. His sister married a man of family, and there was a ball and supper afterwards. He had to drink to the health of the bride and bridegroom, and then to the bride's parents. This made his allowance, but the unfortunate man had to propose the healths of the bridesmaids, and so overstepped the boundary he had for months confined himself to. The consequence was, the next morning he 'wasn't all there' as he expressed it; and in the run, which was the best of the season, he lost nerve, a thing that had never happened to him before, bungled at a stiff fence, and was thrown out. From that moment his reputation was gone. Fellows who never went off the highway vowed he was a muff; and those who oftener saw his back in a run than his front said he was getting past it; he was breaking up; 'twas time he gave over; and that his nerve had gone regularly to smash. If that man had not made a reputation he would not have had to keep it. If he had not had to keep it, he might have enjoyed the many little comforts he liked, and the amusements he was fond of, and come into a good share of property when his uncle died, and what is of more importance, he might have gone on fox-hunting to the end of his days. But having lost his reputation, he became disgusted, lost his appetite, became low in spirits, and eventually in sheer despair took to trotting about

the country three days a fortnight with a pack of harriers."

"The moral is apparent enough," Tom said, laughing. "But there is no danger of my making a reputation. I like fishing, and I think I shall like hunting. I'm not so sure about the shooting, for I've not handled a gun yet. But I'm certain of this —I shall at best be only a moderate performer at either. But tell me, uncle, do you find many men equally good at all sports?"

"Very seldom!" the little man replied. "You will find men who are good at one sport passably fair at others, but you rarely see a man equally good at all. I have met a few good all round sportsmen, but I could count them on the fingers of my right hand, and the best of them was your uncle, Bob Eversley."

"Whom did you say?" asked Tom, looking as though he had not heard aright.

"Your uncle, Mr. Robert Eversley," said the little man.

"I was not aware I had any relative of that name," Tom replied. "Surely you must be mistaken, uncle."

"Not at all," said the little man. "I can tell you a good deal of your history you never knew, Tom. Indeed, there is only one person alive who can tell you as much. I have often thought I would tell you, and put you right as to the relationship between us. I think it is time you should know; and though you are not of my blood, yet I hope, my dear boy, after to-day, a closer tie than ever will bind us."

"Sir—sir!" said Tom, turning red and pale by turns. "I have sometimes thought your goodness to me was the result of a too great gratitude for the slight service I was fortunate enough to afford you."

"Then you were wrong, Tom," the little man replied, looking affectionately at the handsome young fellow before him. "You were wrong, Tom. It was not gratitude. It was something deeper than that. But come into the dining-room, and I will tell you something that has been buried in my heart for twenty years." And he took Tom by the arm and led him from the room.

"Sit you down there, my boy," the little man said when they were in the dining-room, placing Tom so that the light might fall on his face. "Sit you there and listen to me. But, first of all, I must show you something." And going to the old escritoire, he took from it the portraits of Clara and Bob Eversley. Putting the former into Tom's hands he said, "Do you know whose likeness that is, Tom?"

The lad looked at it long and earnestly. At first he did not recognise the face, but, after a time, a tumultuous stream of the ghosts of the past rushed through his brain. His memory of his dead mother awakened and came on him like a flood. For some moments he was unable to speak, but presently he said, in a low, choking voice, "I—I think it must be my mother." When he looked up, the little man saw that his eyes were brimming over with tears, and he was trembling all over.

"You are right, Tom," said the little, man gravely. And handing him the other miniature, he continued, "Do you recognise this, too?"

"I do not," Tom replied after some time. "There is a strong resemblance between this and my dear mother's portrait, and—and—I believe it is like me. It must be the portrait of my mother's brother."

"You are right again," the little man said. "And now, Tom, I will tell you what I just now promised to tell. I will bring to light what has been buried, but never dead—no, never dead—in my heart for so many long years. I will relate to you that, the memory of which has been always green in my heart—the memory of which has kept me straight where I otherwise might have gone into crooked paths—that has kept me upright where I might have fallen—that has saved me the misery of a repentance over follies I might otherwise have committed." And he related to the son of his old love the history of that love—of his youthful hopes, fears, despair, and the chastened spirit with which his manhood had gone on enshrining the memory of her whom he had lost for ever.

"And now," said the little man in conclusion, wiping the perspiration from his face, for he had found it a severe task to "unbury" his dead, "do you wonder at my affection for you? Are you surprised that I bear towards you a feeling stronger and holier than gratitude? I don't think you can, my dear. Had I married your mother—and it was God's will I should not—I might have been your father. The memory of the past, of her beauty, of her goodness, and of her sorrow, comes over me sometimes, and I feel *her* spirit is near me; I feel her presence here now, Tom. Every time I look into your face I see

hers. Every glance of your eye, every tone of your voice, your very smile, reminds me of *her*. I feel at this moment she is looking down on us smiling her approval. By many I should be thought a dreamer, a visionary. But I speak from my heart and not from my head. And this relationship between us—a spiritual relationship, if you will, but still a pure and holy one—will bless the father and bless the son. And though you will be known to the world as my nephew, I will stand to you in the place of a father, and love you as a son. Say, Tom, will you be to me as my own boy?"

Tom looked at the little man, whose presence had at that moment a nobility and benignity seldom seen in mortals just for one moment, but that look spoke far more than words. He took his benefactor's hand and bent his head on it. "Oh, sir! Oh, sir!" was all he could say. When Mr. Seedly took his hand away he found it was wet.

Just then a carriage drove up to the door, and two ladies got out.

"Tom," said the little man, "here are visitors. Mrs. Revell and her daughter have called. You had better go upstairs for a few moments. But first, just listen. She is giving her usual orders."

"Richard," they heard her say, "be sure you take the horse to the stable, and *mind* you have him fed. We'll make a long call on purpose, and it will save the expense of a feed when we return home."

"That's an old campaigner," said the little man, laughing as heartily as though there was no skeleton in *his* closet. "She always, when practicable, quarters herself on the enemy."

CHAPTER VIII.

When Mrs. Revell and her daughter were shown into the drawing-room at The Moat, the elder lady at once began to examine the furniture, the hangings, the carpets, and to make a mental inventory of everything the room contained. It is true she had done the same thing on many previous occasions, but never before with the same feelings. She now regarded The Moat and all it contained with the spirit of a possible future mother-in-law of the future proprietor, and actually came to several conclusions as to the alterations which should take place when she had attained to that position.

"This would make a pretty room, Constance," she said, "if it were only properly fitted up. The furniture is old, the carpet has lost its pattern, and there's no piano. I should have all this altered if I were you."

"Indeed, mamma, your imagination is running away with your common sense," Constance replied. "You talk as if the place already belonged to me. It's quite as probable, to say the least, that I may never enter this room, except as a visitor, as that I shall."

"Don't tell *me!*" Mrs. Revell said. "It will be your own fault if you don't."

"I don't think it will," replied Constance. "According to *my* mind, you are just as likely as not to overdo the thing by being too eager."

"You are a fool!" her mamma said, looking on her daughter in anything but an amiable manner. But just as she had thus expressed her opinion of her daughter's mental condition, the door opened and Mr. Seedly entered. Immediately the clouds passed away, and what appeared like a coming storm was dispelled in a burst of sunshine. Her face, all frowns a moment before, was now all smiles, and beaming on the little man like an elderly goddess—considerably battered and the worse for wear it is true—she exclaimed in the heartiest and most cordial manner, "Ah! and how are you, Mr. Seedly? We are so glad you have returned, aren't we, Constance? I hope we are the first callers. I was telling dear Constance as we drove here I should be disappointed if anyone had been before us to welcome you back to your ancestral halls."

"I am very well indeed," the little man replied. "Better, in fact, than most men at my time of life. I needn't ask you how *you* are; your looks, my dear Mrs. Revell, are sufficient. And how are you, Miss Constance?"

Constance said she enjoyed the most excellent health, but that her spirits were occasionally low.

"Ah, yes, indeed!" her mamma said, smiling sadly on the little man, and shaking her false front

in the most pathetic manner. "There are so few young people in the neighbourhood, Mr. Seedly; scarcely any young folks of her own years within a drive, much less within walking distance; and I'm but poor company for my dear child. The thoughts and feelings of a woman of forty are not often in accordance with those of a girl of twenty, or thereabouts."

"I suppose that is true," the little man remarked, thinking as he did so whether he and Tom would continue to think and feel alike. "We must make allowances for youth, and it's a fault that grows smaller every day, though as far as appearances go, *you* seem as young as you were thir— ten years ago."

"Ah! it isn't years that makes one old, Mr. Seedly. It isn't the time that passes over your head that thins or silvers your hair," mamma replied, smoothing her borrowed locks with an eight-and-a-quarter glove. "As far as *years* go, I ought to be in my prime, for though my child is twenty— Is it twenty or one-and-twenty, love?"

"How absurd you are, mamma; as if Mr. Seedly cared about *my* age," Constance answered, looking bashfully at the little man, and then dropping her eyes. "I was twenty last birthday."

"Thank you, darling. I was merely about to tell Mr. Seedly," mamma said, "that though you are twenty, I married very young. In fact, quite a child. No! it is not years that dry up the fountain of youth; it is trials."

"Your looks and your—ah! may I say youthful spirits," the little man replied, glancing reproach-

fully at the lady, "at any rate give no indication of your having had any trials. I assure you, one would suppose—in fact, I never should have thought it."

The elder lady smiled on him, threatened him with her fan, and wagged her scheming old head in the most vivacious manner. These little performances she was very clever at. Indeed, she had made them a study, and very frequently found them extremely useful. It was so easy to practise them when at a loss for something to say; and it enabled her to look knowing and pleasant when it would have been perhaps difficult to do so had she made a reply instead. It is true she was somewhat at a loss to know when these sort of compliments were genuine, and frequently mistook a little raillery for admiration; but then she always managed to *look* wise, and this is allowed by all competent authorities to be quite as good as *being* wise, if not, indeed, considerably better. So the old woman put on a look of the most charmingly wise description, shook her head until the glass bugles of her bonnet rang like miniature cymbals, and the parting of her front hair shifted a hairbreadth nearer her left eyebrow, and appealing to her daughter, who was wondering whether the heir would be visible that morning or not, said, "Oh, you dreadful man! you are *such* a quiz, and I'm really afraid of you. Isn't he a quiz, love? There is nothing but what *you* know, you naughty man; and I was saying only yesterday to the Baroness, who took lunch at the Cottage, that you were the most dreadful man I know; didn't I, dear?"

"Mamma never knows when you are in earnest or only joking," Constance informed the little man.

"Indeed, and it's perfectly true," her mamma said, prodding at his waistcoat with her fan. "I'm always afraid of you; for you are *so* clever and sarcastic, and all that, and you *will* have your joke. I believe your spirits are so high you would even joke in church; of course, innocently, and with the strictest propriety, you know. Wouldn't he, Constance?"

"Pray don't ask *me*, mamma," Constance replied. "I'm sure I never know how people look or what they do in church. I always find quite sufficient to occupy *my* thoughts during divine service."

"*So* devotional!" mamma said in a stage whisper to the little man. "It is *such* a comfort to find your only child so steady and religiously inclined. No trouble, no anxiety, no — no nothing, you know."

Mr. Seedly hardly knew what to say to this. He had always been under the impression that Constance was—we will not say the reverse of all this—but not exactly what her mother described her to be. Many vague memories occurred to him, which if he could but put them into shape would perhaps throw some doubt on mamma's veracity. But then he had been away for more than twelve months, and charitably came to the conclusion that he was mistaken. It is just possible that Mrs. Revell had some idea of what was passing in his mind, for she immediately changed her ground, and harked back to a question which might be entered upon and no damage done. So without giving him any time to reply, she went

on, with considerable agitation of the fan, "I don't think you're altered a bit. You look just as young as you did ten years ago. But then you've had no trials. Your life has been one of mental ease. You have had no worries, or law suits, or county court—I mean, you know what I mean. And haven't been in Chancery, and if you have, your lawyer has managed it for you. But dear Constance's poor papa departed very early from this vale of tears, and left me to fight my brothers and sisters-in-law, and a lot of horrid people; for, poor dear, he was always in hot water and so indiscreet—not a bit like you—not so clever. Indeed, I think the young men of the present day have much more ability than they had in my time, that is, my poor departed's time, who of course was a *deal* older than me, quite old enough in fact to be my papa. It was quite a joke, in fact, and, by-the-by, the Baroness put me in mind of it yesterday—she is such a clever woman, quite after *your* style, and you'll be charmed with her. Yes, it was quite a joke at the time of my marriage. Some horrid man said that it was against the canons of the church, and that a man couldn't marry his daughter. And I daresay I look five-and-forty."

"That isn't *my* impression as to your age," the little man replied, laughing, but declining to state what his impression was. "If *you* look that age, how old must I appear? Why, my dear Mrs. Revell, 'twould be treason to you, and actual ruin to *me*."

"I didn't say I was five-and-forty, you know. Indeed, that is out of the question, for as I was saying, I was quite a child when I married, and dear

Constance being only twenty, you know," the old woman said. "I'm sure I *look* it though. Now you carry your age well. So much exercise and out-of doors, and hunting. And how did you enjoy your voyage to Australia?"

"Very much!" the little man replied, laughing heartily, and determining in his own mind to find out what his visitors thought, and if it suited his purpose, to let them hold fast to their story and spread it, for he felt quite sure that whatever impression Mrs. Revell should carry away with her would be all over the county as a fact within twenty-four hours. "But how did you know I had gone to Australia?"

"Oh, long journeys like that can never be kept secret," she answered. "I know *all* about it, and I hope you will tell me the rest. What sort of a passage had you? And what were your impressions of that country? Is it true the inhabitants are cannibals, and do the ladies never see a side-saddle, but ride à la—à la man, you know?"

"The parts of my journey by sea were charming," the little man replied. "With respect to the country I can't say much about it, but I believe the ladies do not ride à la man, but much after the same manner as Miss Constance here, though perhaps not quite so gracefully."

"Now you are laughing at me," Constance replied. "Mamma was telling me to-day how badly I rode."

"Not badly, love," her mamma said. "I may have been nervous whenever you went hunting. And

who can wonder at it? Mr. Seedly knows what a mother's heart is."

Mr. Seedly assured her that her feelings did her honour, and that he perfectly understood them. "But you need have been under no apprehension as to Miss Revell's safety," he said, "for the last time I saw her out she was holding quite a levee of admirers, and there must have been at least a dozen young fellows anxious to open the gates for her, or break a gap in the fences."

"*You* were not one of the dozen," Constance said, with a most captivating smile. "I might have remained in the first field, for anything you cared, and had I got into one of the deep drains, I believe you would have gone over me, had it been your line, and never have offered to help me out."

"I think you are rather hard on me," the little man replied. "You must not expect to see the same amount of dash in a man of my years as you would in a young man. As we grow older we get heavier, and take to ride cunning, and that wouldn't suit *you*. Young ladies prefer being attended by younger men than me, as it is right they should be. So don't upbraid me with not attending your court, Constance. It's rather late in the day for me to be attending goddesses in the field. I can admire and worship at a distance, with more comfort, perhaps, and certainly with considerably more safety. We old men are but old fools where youth and beauty are concerned. They may be posts of honour, but they are also posts of danger,

and I leave such posts to the lads who are fit for them."

"Quite right, too," mamma said. "*We* know when we are well off. A comfortable dinner and a rubber at whist at night is all *I* hope for. But young folks want more excitement than people of *our* time of life care about. And now tell me, does he realise all your hopes, or are you disappointed in him? Is he tall or short, and does he dress like an Englishman, or go about all day in top-boots and a red shirt? In fact, is he clever and gentlemanly, and delightful like you, or otherwise?"

"I suppose you allude to my nephew," the little man said.

"It *is* a nephew then;" interrupted Mrs. Revell. "Well, I'm very glad of it. The dear Baroness told me that Mrs. Barker told her that she had heard from very good authority that it was a cousin."

"Yes, my nephew" the little man said. "I am happy to say he is more than I had hoped for. He will be delighted to make your acquaintance, Miss Constance; you may count another ardent admirer from the moment he sees you."

"Does he ride?" Constance inquired. "And is he as fond of sport as you are? It will be so nice for you if your tastes are congenial, you know."

"Tom is a fair sportsman," Mr. Seedly replied. "How he will manage to cross a country, we shall probably know next season, but up to the present time he has had no experience of fox-hunting. He is fond of riding, though, and I fancy he'll be hard to beat."

Mrs. Revell immediately made up her mind to indulge in the expense of a saddle-horse for Constance. She would write to Murray that very day, and tell him to send one on trial. It would have to be perfectly sound, quiet, and worth a small fortune. Purchase money not to exceed twenty pounds, and as much under as he liked. It would be a pity, she thought, if Constance hadn't every opportunity, and she had known many matches made on horses of a different kind to those decided at Newmarket. Besides, the first outlay would be the principal expense, and if she did not exceed twenty pounds, a good horse would always fetch that to run in a cab when she should have no further use for it. The cost of its keep would not be much. It could share the lawn-mowings with her old screw; and Constance would be worse than an ungrateful fool, after all the pains she had taken with her education, if she ever rode out without getting someone to give it a feed of corn.

While these thoughts were passing through her mamma's mind, Constance was also coming to the conclusion that if only she could have a horse her chances of success would be greatly increased. She knew from experience that men are more confidential, more credulous, more prone to self-conceit on horseback than at any other time, and consequently more gullable. There are so many places in his armour open to attack, and if you are but the means of making him admire *himself*, he's almost pretty certain to admire *you* next to that noble individual. A clever woman can humbug a man on almost any subject, and under almost any condition; but the

most favourable condition is when they are on horseback, and, if possible, returning home after a day's hunting, in which he has *not* earned an unenviable distinction.

A man in such a position I should look on as lost. If a modest man, though, he would discover any humbug in your praises of *him*, yet he would never tire of hearing you praise his horse. The dandy will not be taken in with anything you may say of the animal he rides, but will swallow any amount of humbug as to his *own* noble proportions. But if you wish to get on the weak side of all men alike, be they modest, conceited, old, young, parson, layman, duke or counter-jumper, *just hint at their riding*. On this one point the wisest of them are fools. They all think they can ride; and, what is more, they actually believe that other people think so too. You have only to go to the nearest provincial race meeting to be convinced of this. No other supposition will account for the number of gentlemen who put on silk and ride their horses all over so impartially, from head to tail. I once heard a lady say—and they are very good judges—that the most amusing feature of a country meeting is where amateur jockeys are up. You not only get a race for your money, but a pantomime. The present writer once knew a gentleman who regularly wore spurs, and carried a riding-whip to and from his office, although those journeys were made on the top of a 'bus. Indeed, so strongly developed was this feeling, this desire to be thought a horseman, that although he never had a saddle between his knees in his life, his conversation was principally of horses, and

hounds, and racing, and he practised every night before a cheval glass the walk, and particularly the bend of the knees, popularly supposed to be characteristic of all men who spend a large proportion of their waking hours on horseback.

Constance then might be marked "dangerous." If Tom could ride a little, she would make him believe he was a centaur. If the horse he rode had but the usual number of legs—nay, if it had never a leg to stand on, but was the most wretched screw that ever looked through a bridle, she would admire it, pet it, and swear it was the most perfect creature she had ever seen. And as to the lad himself, she would take her mamma's advice and find the measure of *his* foot as early as possible, and if at the end of three months he did not think her the most fascinating of her sex, it should not be her fault.

While the ladies were speculating in this manner on the frailties common to all men, and those in particular which they imagined or hoped peculiar to the heir, that gentleman, to whom Mr. Seedly had sent a message by the servant, entered the room.

The little man introduced Tom to the visitors with considerable pride. He waved his hand towards him with the air of a proprietor, as though he would have said, "Look at him! isn't he a noble fellow? You can't help admiring him. I defy you to do it." And when he said, "my nephew," he rolled the words out on his tongue as if the very utterance of them were a delight and pleasure. "My nephew, ma'am!" he said, "who is good enough to come and keep his old uncle company. Tom, Mrs. Revell

and Miss Constance are our near neighbours, and you cannot fail to be charmed with them."

The young fellow made the ladies a profound bow, and was bowed profoundly to. Indeed the elder lady's salaam could be compared to nothing but those genuflexions supposed to be seen to most advantage when partners set to each other in a quadrille. She smiled on him, agitated her fan, and bent her knees beneath the folds of her silk gown until she almost knelt, the whole performance being an elaborate curtsey. Constance bowed profoundly too, but not to such an extent as her mamma. It was a shy, timid, and retiring salaam, indicating girlish timidity and reserve. It was supplemented, however, by a glance from her eyes, which were her best feature, but as Tom was himself looking at the carpet, it was shot in vain. When the lad did glance at that young innocent, her eyes fell in modest confusion before his—though he was most painfully modest and could not have looked a pretty woman out of countenance to save his life—thereby showing to advantage her long lashes, which she had darkened in the most artistic manner before she had left home.

"So delighted to make your acquaintance," mamma said. "I was remarking to dear Constance this morning—that is I intended doing so—you will be such an acquisition to the limited society of the neighbourhood. Indeed any new arrival would be regarded in that light, but Mr. Seedly's nephew will be looked on as a perfect godsend."

Tom was not without a good deal of humour, and had learned to turn a compliment as neatly as most

other young fellows of his age. So he replied that the lady's kindness was overpowering, and a great deal more to the same purpose. "I fear you form a too flattering opinion of me" he said; "an opinion I must ascribe to my uncle's worth. But I am sure it will be my great aim in life to merit your kind words, and should I have the fortune to succeed, believe me, I shall die happy.

"There now, my dear Mr.—Mr."—mamma began.

"I beg your pardon," the little man said. "My nephew's name is Seedly. Mr. Thomas Burton Seedly."

"Thank you! Then Mr. Thomas,—may I say Thomas? Two Mr. Seedlys you know. Indeed there must be a distinction now, don't you think so?" mamma went on, pleasantly. "If there isn't, there will be all sorts of awkwardness, opening each other's letters, keeping each other's appointments, and I don't know what all. Is there any objection to your nephew being known as Mr. Thomas?" One can't always speak of him as Mr. Seedly Junior, you know, and he's sure to be very much sought after—such an acquisition, you know."

"He will be only too gratified, I'm sure!" the little man replied, with a smile. "Tom, won't you be proud to be called by your Christian name by Mrs. Revell? I'm sure you will, you rogue!"

"I shall be charmed!" Tom said. He had seated himself close to Constance and had entered into an interesting conversation with that young lady respecting the weather, the coming harvest, and the measles which had broken out at Chirkwell. She was expatiat-

ing on the charms of a calm and peaceful existence in the country, and discharging her artillery at the lad, and, as she afterwards informed her mamma, "putting his feathers the right way," when Mrs. Revell asked if she might call him Mr. Thomas. "And what am *I* to call you, or how am *I* to speak of you?" she inquired in a confidential whisper. "Am I included in the permission you have given mamma?" And her eyes were directed pointblank at him, and cast down immediately in the most charming bashfulness.

Tom was beginning to think what a nice, good-looking, unaffected girl she was. A little bashful, he thought, but that comes of youth and inexperience. The old woman was a bit snobbish, it is true, but her daughter seemed to him the most natural and modest girl he had ever met. It was not a fair match by any means. The innocent little thing, who sat by his side making eyes at him, had ten times his experience, ten times his ability in the art of humbugging, and considerable skill in disguising under the appearance of simplicity her knowledge of fence. But Tom was not aware of this. He was of opinion when he saw the eye business, that she was timid and afraid of him; and he smoothed and stroked his little moustache with the faintest suspicion that he was a deuce of a fellow. So he told her that it would be impossible to please him more than by her calling him by his Christian name.

"But 'Mr. Thomas' is so formal and so long, isn't it?" she asked, shyly.

Tom said he thought so too. "I am usually

called 'Tom' among my friends," he replied. "Why may not you call me 'Tom,' for I hope we shall be very excellent friends."

"Oh! may I?" she asked, giving another of those glances. "But it would not be quite right for me to call you 'Tom'; at least not yet. I may call you 'Mr. Tom,' though, mayn't I?"

"Please do! but you have dropped your glove. Allow me to pick it up," Tom replied, picking up a six-and-three-quarters, lemon kid with a rent down the back of the thumb, made in forcing it on, and holding it in his open hand. "What a very small glove you wear! I really should not have thought anyone's hand so small."

"What are you talking about there?" Mrs. Revell asked, to the great joy of her daughter. That young lady did not relish the turn the conversation had taken, as her hand was not a small one—they were too much like mamma's for that—and she had a wart on her thumb. So she was glad of the diversion the old woman made in her favour, and replied, "That Mr. Seedly—well, if she must say it, Mr. Tom—was so very sarcastic and *so* like his uncle, she was almost afraid to say anything."

"My love, I was sure of it. There's something about Mr. Thomas that tells one he's clever, and a quiz, and altogether a dreadful young man," mamma said, shaking her fan at the terrible fellow, and wagging her old head. "Don't tell me! I haven't lived fifty-five—forty years not to know that ability is hereditary, and runs in families. I'm sure it does. He gets all that dreadful clever-

ness from you, Mr. Seedly. It's just the same with my dear child. She gets her shyness and timidity from me, for I was painfully shy when I was her age, and have often walked miles rather than meet a gentleman."

It was altogether useless their repudiating any claim to the qualities the two ladies ascribed to them. Every man, be he saint or sinner, thinks the better of himself if he is supposed to be rather dreadful than otherwise, the old woman thought. The experience of a greater number of years than she would ever own to, unless inadvertently, assured her that few men objected to that sort of reputation. Her memory recalled the winks, the nods, she had seen pass between elders of the church, deacons, and other saints, and the pleased manner with which they had listened to tales of their racketing, roystering younger days. And so she went on, scarcely giving them a chance of speaking, working her fan, agitating the bugles on her bonnet, discomposing her false front, and otherwise taking a prodigious amount of exercise, and requesting them not to tell her, for she knew all about it.

"And now, Mr. Thomas," she continued, "you have not told us how you like this country. Not so extensive or hot, I suppose, as Australia, but with rather more society. A wonderful place for making money, I am told. But it cannot beat our native land for opportunities of spending it. And now," she continued, looking at her watch, "it is time we were leaving. Goodness gracious, Constance, my love, we have been here an hour and a half. How time flies in pleasant society!"

Mr. Seedly rang the bell, and ordered the servant to bring some refreshment. Mrs. Revell protested against this, vowing she could touch nothing. After considerable trouble, however, she was induced to take four glasses of sherry and the breast of a chicken, and then declared that they really must go.

"And you must come to the cottage," she said to Tom. "Two lone women of course can't offer many inducements to young men, or promise them much amusement. But you are a sportsman, I believe, and I understand there is some excellent fishing in the brook at the bottom of the lawn."

Tom promised he would soon pay them a call, and might on some future occasion bring his rod with him.

"We mustn't expect to see you *very* soon, I suppose!" Constance said in a low voice, with a glance and a falling of her eyes.

Tom was prevented from answering by Mrs. Revell. A gentle pressure of the hand, however, said equally as much as any words could have done.

"And now," said the old woman, "good-bye. Don't come out. I won't hear of it. Good-bye." And she walked to her carriage, at the door of which stood Mr. Seedly's groom. "I've fed the horse, mum," John informed her.

"Thank you, John," said the old woman, smiling on him. "I haven't any change with me now, but I'll owe you threepence."

After they had got on the highway, Mrs. Revell said, "I think we did fairly, Constance. Not a bad beginning."

"Not bad, mamma," Constance replied. "But what made you tell him to bring his fishing-rod? You know there's not a fish in the brook."

"It will be an excuse for him!" mamma said. "And there'll be a nice fish there very soon, and if you don't hook him, my dear, you're a fool."

CHAPTER IX.

When Mrs. Revell and Constance compared notes as to their call at The Moat, they came to the conclusion that nothing could have been better. Mamma had aired the Baroness, and imagined she must have made a considerable impression, for like all loyal Britons, Mr. Seedly was not above a weakness for high sounding titles; and had the occasion happened, which it never did, might possibly have thrown over a plain squire to dine with a baronet. And the present writer does not think the worse of him on that account. It is possible to write many caustic things on snobbishness and snobs, but then there are snobs of different degrees. Were we to sit down and write a philippic against the whole race of snobs, we should certainly offend nine-tenths of our own personal acquaintances, and probably the same proportion of our fellow-countrymen and women. We have seen the most brusquely independent, plain spoken people, when their interests are concerned, practise all the fawnings of the worst class of snobs, just as we have noticed that the most advanced liberals are in similar circumstances the most uncompromising conservatives. So we will not blame the little man if he did feel gratified in talking of

the Baroness; and if he did swallow that title, let us hope it did not disagree with him.

So the old woman felt sure she had made an impression on both uncle and nephew. Constance retailed to her her conversation with the lad, his freshness, his simplicity, and what she believed to be, his evident admiration for her. "A thing well begun is half done," said the old woman. "I must say you behaved very well, and with the strictest propriety, Constance, and I hope for the happiest results."

Both of them now felt a sort of proprietorship in the lad. They determined to please him, to make him pleased with himself, and more than all, with the cottage and those who lived there. Mamma would invite him there. Press him to come whenever he felt inclined, and consider himself as the friend of the family. Constance would humbug him, and make herself pleasant to him; and both of them would sound his praises among the few people whom they visited in the neighbourhood. The old screw which drew their carriage had a hard time of it for the next week. They were driven to every house within ten miles of Chirkwell, in which Mrs. Revell was on visiting terms. She declared the Australian was quite gentlemanly and presentable, "and really altogether you know an acquisition to the neighbourhood."

The consequence was that a great many others soon called at The Moat, and before long, Tom was invited to half a dozen houses where there were marriageable daughters. Papas asked his opinion on sheep, for being an Australian, he was certain to

be well up on the subject, and on agricultural matters generally. At first these queries somewhat threw the lad off his balance, but whatever little awkwardness he at first displayed in his evasions or answers, was put down to modesty, and altogether forgotten after he had purchased "Stevens' Book on the Farm." With these he soon became popular, for the elders liked the lad's modesty, and the girls admired his good looks and blushes, both, however, having a keen eye for the main chance. With the brothers, cousins, and the bachelors in general, he was not so popular, though he was liked by them. If they wanted a bout with the gloves, or a companion in a tandem, or for a day's fishing, Tom was always at their service, if not engaged to Mr. Seedly. But on the other hand, though he was free enough with his money, yet he did not fool it away, and would have as near as possible his money's worth. He could not be persuaded to play at billiards or unlimited loo, for the reason that he did not understand those games, and considered it too expensive for him to learn at an average price of three guineas a lesson. None of his friends could persuade him to buy a horse of him unless he actually wanted one, and not then for more than its market value, or without the opinion of his uncle, and a veterinary surgeon. And he absolutely refused to back a bill for one young gentleman who declared solemnly he should without fail take it up in ten days at the farthest; and after a time found out who invariably held honours at whist, and backed out on all occasions from playing with those favourites of fortune.

At first some of the young fellows who could not

understand a new man having an opinion of his own, and standing to it, were inclined to resent these injuries. They could understand his not playing at billiards or loo, "for very likely the fellow never heard of the games before," they observed to each other. "But hang it, it's too much of a good thing that he should refuse to back a gentleman's bill, or buy a horse offered to him, and they'd be dashed if it wasn't time to let him down a peg or two."

This process of letting down a peg or two was tried in the neighbouring market town, at the farmers' ordinary, where most of the country gentlemen and better class farmers dined, and like many other experiments proved rather a failure. Mr. Adolphus Bogey, a big, heavy-headed second son of a baronet, and grandson of a coach-builder, undertook the task of putting the new fellow right. He drank more wine at the dinner than was probably good for him, and talked loudly of "upstarts coming into a country from nobody knew where, and giving themselves confounded airs, and all that, you know." "Can't see the fun of the old residents in the county being held of no account, you know," said this misguided young man, backed up by the nods and winks of half a dozen youths as beery and heavy-headed as himself, but all of whom would in time become steady, respectable squires, and settle down and cultivate their paternal acres.

"Ah! I say Seedly, you're a new man you know, and though we know your uncle, we don't know you. Nobody seems to know anything about you, except that you come from Australiar, nor who your father was, you know. We are the county, don't

you see—and the ah—the aristocracy, and my brother is the baronet, and deuced old family and all that."

"What is that booby talking about down there?" asks Sir Thomas Oldacre, of his friend and neighbour, the parson.

"He is questioning young Seedly with respect to his antecedents, and holding forth as to his own ancient ancestry," the parson replied. "Young Seedly looks after his pocket money, and won't back bills nor buy unsound horses at what would be fancy prices for sound ones."

"Do shut him up, parson," says Sir Thomas.

"He is shut up already, and very neatly too," the parson replied, laughing. "We'll drop in on these young fellows presently, Sir Thomas, when they leave the room. They intend roasting young Seedly, and it will come off in the billiard-room. I expect somebody will catch a Tartar."

Mr. Bogey was shut up. Tom's answer was considerably more than he asked for, for the lad, whom Mr. Seedly had posted up in all the pedigrees of the county, not only told him who his father was, but gave him also some information of a personal nature.

"I'm very sorry," Tom said, smiling, "that you should suffer any inconvenience on my account. Had you given me the slightest intimation that you desired to know what my father's profession was, I should only have been too happy to satisfy your curiosity. My father was a poor soldier, and although he was not, I believe, related to a baronet, yet he was a gentleman. 'Tisn't everybody, my dear Bogey, who is so well descended as

yourself. Your father, you say, was a baronet, and I know your grandfather was a most respectable tradesman. Indeed, I've often heard my uncle say, that the best dog-cart he ever had was built by your respected grandpapa." And Tom looked calmly into the eyes of the unfortunate descendant of a long line of coachbuilders, as though he had said the pleasantest thing in the world.

"Oh, all right, old feller!" said Mr Bogey. "All right, old feller. You don't handle the cue yourself, I believe, but you don't object to see others, I s'pose? I fancy a match will come off in the billiard-room directly. P'raps you don't mind stepping up."

"Not in the least," Tom replied. And presently the young fellows dropped out by twos and threes, and assembled in the billiard-room, where Sir Thomas and the parson followed them. And as parsons have always been esteemed the best reporters of sporting events, we cannot do better than give the reverend gentleman's own words of what occurred, as spoken in the presence of his bishop, who was himself a muscular Christian, and Mr Seedly, while discussing the parson's celebrated claret, after a visitation day.

"These young fellows," said the parson, "had evidently determined to roast your young one, and had set young Bogey, whose name ought to be Booby, to do it. The little chaff that passed at dinner, in which your lad, Seedly, had it all his own way, had irritated Bogey, and as they said they should go up to the billiard-room afterwards, Sir Thomas and I followed them, to prevent anything like a scandal, you know. But there was nothing

whatever to call for the interference of the Church. When we entered, your lad was sitting smoking his cigar, and Bogey was sitting close to him. We heard the latter say, 'Now old feller, this won't do you know. You mentioned my grandfather just now, and perhaps you had me there; but then we never own to him, and it doesn't count. I ain't good at chaff, I know, but I tell you what, I'm about the best man here with the gloves, and I'll put them on with you. There now.'

"'Don't you, Seedly,' young Mansfield said. 'He's a dab hand at the gloves, and will give it you like fun.' Bogey was determined though, and moreover the general voice was in favour of a set-to. Your young one behaved very well indeed, Seedly. He evidently thought the joke had gone far enough. He objected; he said it might cause ill-blood. But it was of no use. I believe, Seedly, they began to fancy he was afraid, for the more he objected the more determined they became. At last he said, 'Well, if you must, you must, I suppose, but 'pon my word, Bogey, I think you're a fool.' He then came over to Sir Thomas and me, and inquired whether he would be disturbing us. But what could we say, my lord? If we had objected 'twould have been of no use, and if we remained we might prevent anything serious."

"Perfectly true. I'm quite of your opinion, and I should have liked to have been with you," his lordship replied.

"Just so, my lord," the parson continued. '"Well then, Bogey and young Seedly pulled off their coats and put on the gloves. They couldn't have been

better matched in size, though perhaps Bogey would have the advantage in weight. Well, it wasn't long before we knew who would have the best of it. I don't know, Seedly, where your lad picked up his science, but a prettier sparrer, or a harder hitter I never saw. He put me in mind of Croft, who was with us at St. Boniface, my lord."

"Croft was a neat hand!" his lordship murmured. "A very neat hand, but I beat him."

"I remember it well," said the parson. "Your lordship was an artist, and always a terrible hitter both in our college days, and since, in theological controversies. Young Seedly hadn't the finish your lordship had, but still he is a sweet performer. I shouldn't think they'd been at it five minutes when Bogey was all abroad, and quite at your lad's mercy, though, indeed, he was that from the first. Young Seedly would go on no longer with Bogey, and they shook hands there and then, but he kindly placed himself at the disposal of any of the others, an offer which, I need scarcely say, was declined. I wonder where he learned it?"

"I fancy I know," the little man replied, being in his heart highly gratified. "We were together in London for some months, and just before we came away I had occasion to pay a visit to a man who was celebrated in his day as—a—a—prize-fighter, my lord."

"A gladiator!" said his lordship. "Just so; I've heard of them, Mr. Seedly, when I was younger."

"You see, my lord, we have a lot of vermin at The Moat, and I wanted a good game dog," continued the little man, apologetically.

"I'm fond of a game terrier myself," his lordship remarked. "I think I heard you say you had a litter of pups out of a game bitch. I think I must drop in and give you a call some day."

"My lord, I shall be proud," said the little man in great delight. "She's a beauty. Black and tan head—short on the leg, and game at fox or badger. I beg your pardon; I mean this was the bitch I went to see, but I had forgotten my way. To my surprise, Tom, who had never been in London before that visit, put me right. I can give a pretty good guess where he picked up his science."

In the meantime Tom's visits and calls at The Cottage became very frequent. He was continually going in that direction fishing, but usually his basket was as empty when he returned as when he started. In Mrs. Revell's drawing-room was a glass globe which contained three unhappy gold-fish, but no one angled for *them*. No one had ever known a fish caught in the brook at the bottom of the lawn, so it was useless for Tom to throw his fly in *those* waters, which indeed he never did, although most of the time he was supposed to be fishing was passed either in the cottage or on the cottage lawn. Mr. Seedly was astonished at the pertinacity with which the lad devoted himself to this pursuit, and wondered how it was he never caught anything unless *he* was with him. On these occasions it is needless to state they did not fish in the brook at Chirkwell. The little man held a theory of his own with respect to all this, very flattering to himself. He was not in the least annoyed that Tom should bring home no fish, or that he should invariably,

when on these excursions alone, find the trout would not rise, or came short, or there were no flies on the water. "See what it is to go out with a good fisherman!" he would say, with a chuckle. "When *I* go with you, you can always take a dish of fish. You see how I handle my rod and what flies to use, and how to drop them on the water." It is the present writer's opinion that the fish for which the hooks were baited, and the flies dressed, would not go in Tom's basket, and that the hooks and baits and flies with which it was to be caught came not from Mr. Farlow's or Mr. Little's shop, but from the laboratory of that magician who makes youth and beauty last for ever, Monsieur Eugene Rimmel.

Mrs. Revell was kindness itself and her conversation was charming. She would amuse him by relating all she knew, and a great deal she did not know, of the people in the neighbourhood. Everyone of them had a skeleton in their cupboard, and kept it under lock and key. But no locks and no keys could hide it from *her* sight. They might put it away with other old lumber in the garrets, or wall it up in their cellars, but *she* knew what houses were haunted, and by the ghosts of what. Not a peccadillo, a misalliance, a slip from the paths of virtue, or a violation of the laws of society but what she knew the whole history of, and told it in the most charming manner, with many Christian-like remarks, to dear Mr. Thomas. It was astonishing what an amount of personal information the lad acquired in this way. Before he had been at The Moat twelve months he had had deposited in his breast the secrets of half the

families in the neighbourhood. Mamma had pensioners; she did a deal of good among the cottagers, and her benefactions were not confined to her own village or her own parish. Tom knew half a dozen parishes, at least, in which she had pensioners, to whom she occasionally gave an old dress, or a bottle of poisonous wine if they were ill. These pensioners were mostly old women who were occasionally employed by the better-class families to help in the gardens, kitchens, laundries, and sometimes even in the bedchambers as midwives. In these capacities they heard the most secret thoughts and actions of the drawing-room freely discussed in the kitchen. And so the stream of information flowed from its source of charwomen, midwives, and pensioners, to the reservoir at the cottage, and was drawn off in spicy draughts for the delectation of the lad. The source of this stream cannot be said to have been pure, it is true. How could it be, when it was fed by the drainings of social cesspools, and gathered poison in its course? But it could not be helped. In every neighbourhood there are sure to be two or three persons of inquiring minds, who are not only anxious to find out the business of their friends and neighbours, but who have developed an appetite amounting almost to a mania for information affecting their personal characters. It was in this way that Tom became aware how it was Miss Spanker was sent off to her aunt, and for what reason her father discharged his groom at the same time—an old story, and one which had almost been forgotten. But then Miss Spanker was handsome, had a good fortune in her

own right, was at home again, and was not engaged, and, according to Mrs. Revell, could hardly expect to be. Indeed, so bad an impression had she given the lad of the people at whose houses she visited, and whose dinners she eat, that in the simplicity of his heart, he asked his uncle if all the stories he had heard were true, "for it seems to me there's something shady about everybody we know, and, altogether, it's a deuce of a place," Tom said. "None but the ugly girls are virtuous and not all of them, and everyone of them who has the least pretensions to good looks is or has been under a cloud."

"You have been listening to Mrs. Revell," the little man said.

Tom owned, with a blush, that he had.

"And when she tells you these stories," the little man continued, "she commences, 'It is said,' or 'They say this, that, or the other,' and breaks off in the middle of her narrative with the remark that 'she'll say nothing,' and that 'bygones should be bygones.'"

Tom again owned it was true.

"Very well," said the little man. "Her interrupted tales are worse that if she told you the whole truth, and you gain an impression you would not otherwise have gained—that the persons she has been speaking of are very queer folks indeed. Now mind, Tom, that old woman is an awful fibber. Don't believe one word she says. If it suited her, she would tell queer tales of you and me. Constance, I believe, is a good girl. At any rate, I don't hear of her pulling her friends to pieces. But mamma is a scheming, wilful, dangerous old piece of affectation."

He could not deny this, for Mr. Seedly knew the old woman better and had known her longer than himself. It was unpleasant to believe, for was she not Constance's mamma? He would willingly have thought everyone connected with that house good and pure and truthful. He would think himself only too blessed if all his future should be as bright and happy as the hours he spent there. Mamma did not abuse him, nor lecture him, nor worry him. Her relations with her daughter, as far as he could see, were of the most affectionate kind, and if she did point out to him any little real or imaginary faults in the characters of her friends, she always spoke of her daughter with the greatest pride and affection. "Me child" was all a fond mother's heart could desire. Though she was young in years, her good sense was remarkable. In fact, she assured her dear Mr. Thomas that her darling Constance, that pledge of the affection of her dear departed, was an epitome of all the domestic virtues. And Tom believed her. *She* didn't abuse anyone! *she* did not object to smoking! Tom was rather fond of a pipe at this time of his life, and always carried about with him a small india-rubber portmanteau with a stock of Turkish tobacco. He liked a smoke after breakfast, and two or three more between that meal and lunch. He liked to lie on his back and read a novel, while the warm sun streamed in through the open window. He had no objection to enjoying that happy state of peace and repose vulgarly called laziness. In fact, he was like a good many other young fellows of one-and-twenty. I know one older than that who is fond of Turkish

tobacco, and who could smoke a good many pipes between breakfast and lunch, were it not for certain reasons unnecessary to state here, but which are perfectly well understood by himself and the tobacconist with whom he deals. Did Constance object to a pipe indoors? Oh, no! She didn't mind *his* smoking, and would never, never dream of putting *his* pipe out. Did mamma? She thought not, in his case at any rate. Mamma certainly did object to *some* people smoking; but then *he* was such a favourite with mamma, and others smoked quite a different sort of tobacco. There was Mr. Bogey, for instance. She did not like Mr. Bogey. He was stupid and conceited—not a bit like you—and smoked horrid tobacco. But Tom might smoke, and lie on the couch with his dirty boots on the antimacassar, and mamma would smile, call him an indolent young fellow, and leave him alone with "me child"; and afterwards, when he had gone home, storm and rave at his nasty bachelor habits, every one of which Constance was a fool if she did not break him of as soon as ever she became the presiding divinity at The Moat. But then Tom did not hear the old woman storm and rave. *He* was not a witness to the domestic squabbles and differences. He was only aware that mamma made much of him, gave him unlimited freedom in his intercourse with me child, and that Constance occasionally lit his pipe for him, declaring, however, that even one puff made her ill, though at night she could sit in her dressing-gown before getting into bed, and smoke three or four cigarettes—a few boxes of which she had got on tick in the neighbouring

town for her cousin, you know!—over one of Mudie's novels.

Although mamma and Constance agreed so well when Tom was present, and spoke so highly and affectionately of each other to him that he was persuaded they were the most united mother and daughter in the world, yet they had their tiffs when lone as in former times, and there were lectures and complaints on one side and outbursts of temper on the other, just as there used to be before Tom became a visitor. Mamma acknowledged that Constance was playing her cards very carefully, but at the same time intimated that her play might be improved. "There are many little things which, though of small account in themselves, help to make a good impression," the old woman informed her daughter. "A slight show of interest in the welfare of the cottagers always looks well in a young woman, and if I were you, I would begin to visit a little among that sort of people, and read to them. It will do you no harm, and the chances are, young Seedly, who I must say is a perfect ninny, will have the better opinion of you."

Constance declared that she hated that sort of thing; that she neither could nor would descend to such hypocrisy. But she did, nevertheless, on it being hinted by mamma that when she was married it need not continue. On these little errands of mercy and love it is needless to say that Tom accompanied her. He carried the little basket which contained the small packages of tea and snuff for the old women, and the book, from which she was to administer to their spiritual wants. That

basket never appeared in the cottages unless *he* carried it; and it soon became evident to the villagers that the tall young gentleman who came to The Cottage so regularly two or three times a-week was Miss Revell's young man. Indeed, so very apparent was this that the little boys would leave their play in the gutters when they saw him coming, and run to the paling that separated the lawn from the road, and shout out to Constance that her sweetheart was a-coming; an intimation which more than once prevented Tom surprising them in one of those little bickerings which, if report spoke truly, and the servants at The Cottage were to be believed, were not unfrequent. The old folks of the village were quite as well posted up in the state of affairs as the young ones, and more than once Tom had been put to confusion by some blear-eyed old dame inquiring of them "when it was to be?"

While this was going on, Tom did not lose sight of his old friends altogether. Occasionally, though it must be confessed at long intervals, he delighted the good folks at Hulme Terrace with a visit, and once he occupied his old room. His friendship for Sam and Marion was as strong as ever, though the letters that passed between them were few and far between. They were in London, completing their studies for the stage, and had not much time for writing, and, as we all know, Tom's hands were tolerably full. From this easy state, however, he was roused one morning by a letter from Marion.

"My dear Mr. Seedly," she said. "I suppose I must not call you Tom any more. Of course *all*

hat is passed and buried, though I shall always hink of you as *Tom*. I am glad to hear such good ccounts of you from our *dear* friends in Hulme Terrace, and that you sometimes go to see them. I lon't mind telling *you* that I used to long for the ime when I should enter on my profession, and ow that time is at hand, I am in fear and almost n terror. I am engaged to appear at the Theatre Royal at Liverpool next month. It will be my *debût* n the provinces. Sam, whom I see very often, is o be of the same company. I must now conclude, as it is *very* late. I shall always be glad to hear of your welfare, and I am, dear Tom,

"Your affectionate friend,

"MARION.

"P.S. Sam is behaving very strangely, and I'm quite concerned about him. I'm afraid he has got into loose company.

"P.S. 2nd. Do you think you could run up and see him?"

"My dear uncle," said Tom, handing him the letter, "I must go to London!"

CHAPTER X.

"I'm sorry to read that," said Mr. Seedly, folding Marion's letter, and returning it to Tom. "London is the very deuce of a place for a young fellow to go to the bad, and I should be sorry to hear that this one was that way inclined. I don't forget what I owe him, Tom, and I expect our friend Maggs would be terribly cut up if he heard it, and believed it, which doesn't always follow, you know. 'Tis just as likely she is mistaken. Girls often think a lad is being ruined without the slightest reason."

"I hope she is mistaken," Tom replied. "I can't imagine Sam going wrong at all. I'll run up by the next train, and write you to-night after I arrive. I wouldn't say anything to Mr. Maggs."

"Much better not," the little man said. "If he believed it, and I don't think he would, it would do no good. I wish I could go with you, Tom. But I must be in Manchester to-day. If I were with you I would soon see how matters were. If he is in trouble at all, it will be about a woman, or else debt. I would soon find it out, and arrange everything. Trust an old fellow for that." And the little man, who as far as women were concerned,

was the most simple creature alive, looked as knowing as the most consummate rake about town.

"Well, uncle, if I want your help I will let you know," Tom answered.

"Do!" said the little man. "And if it's a matter of money, we'll soon put it straight. Just as likely as not he owes forty or fifty pounds, and to a young fellow a debt of that amount seems frightful. Shall I sign a cheque in blank for you?"

"No, thank you," Tom replied. "If any money is wanted I'll let you know the amount. But I scarcely think it can be that, for Mr. Maggs allows him a hundred a year, until he has completed his studies."

"Well, let me hear from you," the little man said, shaking Tom's hand. "And don't stay away long, for the old house is confoundedly lonely when you are away. Good-bye, my boy."

So Tom drove to the station, and having purchased all the daily and weekly papers and periodicals, and two or three volumes of light literature, in order to pass away the time until he arrived in London, he took his ticket, and inquired of the guard, showing that gentleman a half-crown by the way, whether it were possible for him to have a compartment to himself, for like all noble young Britons, he disliked company in a railway carriage.

"This is the express, sir," the guard informed him. "Carriages always full. Better look sharp, sir. Time's up."

Tom placed a shilling on the half-crown. The guard looked at the coins, and then at Tom. At

last he said, placing his hand in a convenient position, "There's a coach with only one passenger, sir, and he's asleep. All the others are full."

"That'll do," Tom replied. "Bring my portmanteau and put it under the seat."

When the train had moved out of the station, Tom began first to examine his fellow-traveller. This he might do at his ease, and stare at him as much as he liked, for that gentleman (it was a gentleman) was asleep, and gave him every opportunity of a quiet study of his person. He was a short, stout, florid-looking man of about fifty years of age, but still, if appearances are anything to go by, of tremendous personal strength. His whiskers, huge and wiry, were of a deep black, tinged with grey, and met under his chin. His eyebrows were quite black, and very bushy. His forehead was deeply corrugated, and his round bullet-shaped head, from which a beaver skin cap had fallen, was covered with a most luxuriant crop of short black curly hair. He was dressed in a blue cloth jacket and waistcoat, and black trousers. In his ears he wore a pair of small gold rings.

"You're a sailor; probably first mate, or perhaps, master," Tom said to himself when he had made the above observations. "And you're no beauty."

"I suppose he'll not object to smoke," Tom thought. "It can't hurt him, and it won't spoil his looks. I think I'll light up." So he filled his pipe, cut one of the papers, and lying at full length on the cushions on one side of the compartment, smoked and read with considerable perseverance, if not comfort. His fellow-traveller was quiet, and

ıe tobacco good, and presently, finding a strong ındency in the letters to run into each other, he ıt his paper fall on his knees and dropped into a ain of thought, a little of which was about Sam, nd a good deal about himself. This lasted for bout twenty minutes, or as long as it will take a ɔlerably hard smoker to get through a pipe of a ɜspectable size. At the end of that time he nocked the ashes out, and turned on his elbow to ɜach his tobacco-pouch, bringing his face by this ıovement in a line opposite his neighbour. Instead f at once proceeding to load his pipe, however, he at, or rather lay, staring at a pair of grey eyes, the upils of which were very bright, though the whites ıight have been whiter and less bloodshot, which ere staring at him.

"What cheer, my hearty?" asked the owner of he grey eyes, in a hoarse voice. "You take things ery cool."

"I'm glad you think so," Tom replied. "It's a omfort to hear I look cool this hot weather."

"Well, and so you are. No harm in that, s there, mate? You're more than cool, you're reezing. I'd like to have had you on board my ast craft. You'd have cooled the whole crew, hough it was a hot place."

"Indeed, Mr.——"

"Oh, you're after my name, are you?" he con-inued. "Jack Waters is my name, England is my nation, and I'm ashamed of neither. 'What am I?' I'm a free-born Briton, as sails the ocean o'er. That's what *I* am. 'What rank do I hold?' Certifi-ate of master, extra master, and master of steam, and

qualified to take any class ship to any part of the known world, and have taken two or three to worlds that parsons preach about, but no one ever come back from to tell us what sort of countries they are, as far as I've heard."

"Then, Captain Waters, I'm sorry I smoked without asking your permission," Tom said, filling his pipe, however, as he spoke. "This is not a smoking carriage, I believe; I should have asked you whether you had any objection, but I thought you were asleep. I hope it is not too late now? Do you mind my smoking?"

"Not a bit. You needn't call me Captain Waters. I'm pretty well known in Liverpool, and, maybe, at the London Docks too. And everybody that knows me calls me Jack Waters, or Captain Jack," he replied. "I don't mind your smoking, and I don't mind joining you. I've seen many a time when I would have given a month's pay for a handful of tobacco."

"Let me offer you some of mine," said Tom, handing him his pouch.

"Thankee, mate," replied Captain Jack. "This is Turkish, and I've smoked a good bit of this in my time, for I've been in them parts too. And you try this," he continued, pulling out of his pocket a large flask of brandy. "Just try this—pure and genuine. Don't be afraid! Exchange is no robbery."

"You won't!" he said, when Tom declined his offer, on the plea of its being too early in the day for drinking spirits. "Well, you know best; I drink it any time, and that's whenever I can get it. I've had this flask filled twice to-day, and I hope to

have it filled and emptied two or three times more before we reach town." And he placed the flask to his lips and drank with much gusto.

"I suppose you have travelled a good deal!" Tom remarked when he had lighted his pipe. He thought he had better say something, and he might as well hazard this observation as any other.

"You may say that," Captain Jack replied. "I've been all the world over. I've brought tea from the China seas, and cotton from the States, and taken convicts to Van Diemen's land. There are few places I haven't seen, and few seas I've not sailed over in the forty years since I first smelt tar, and got my first thrashing with a rope's-end."

"Your experience must be a remarkable one," Tom said. "During the time you have followed the sea as a profession, I've no doubt you've had many adventures and escapes. Very likely you've been wrecked, or your ship burned, or lost, or cast away."

Captain Waters had recourse again to his flask, the contents of which were, apparently, beginning to have effect. He looked at the lad for a few moments, with a look of stupid suspicion in his grey eyes, and said, "Praps you're right, and praps you're wrong."

Tom looked at his companion and thought he was drunk. "He can't drink neat spirits like that," he thought, "without becoming drunk. Hang it! He might become unpleasant. I'll change carriages at Peterborough." So he asked him if he would like to see the paper.

"I hate papers," Captain Waters replied in a voice that was becoming thick as well as hoarse. "I hate 'em. A man can't do a bit of business on the

quiet now but they get hold of it, and show him up, and put the sharks after him."

Tom offered no reply to this observation, but relapsed into silence and smoke. This continued for a considerable time, during which his companion carried his flask to his lips every five minutes with the utmost regularity until it was emptied. At length he called out from his corner of the compartment in a voice that had now become *very* thick, "Hullo, mate!"

"Well!" inquired Tom, looking up, and wondering what his companion was like when in his cups, and whether he should call the guard's attention to him at the first station at which they should stop.

"Tellings is knowings," the captain remarked, with a drunken leer.

Tom now made up his mind that he *would* communicate with the guard. "The fellow may be dangerous," he thought. "And I'm sure he's as strong as a bullock."

After another considerable period of silence, during which time the captain's potations were rapidly bringing him to a state of drunken garrulity, he said, "What cheer, mate! You ask whether I've had adventures, or been wrecked, or lost my ship. I answer, I have, all three. 'What! lost my craft?' I've lost ten ships in my time, and kept my certificate. 'Have I lost my ship by fire?' Yes! I see the *Saucy Jane* now, this minute, burning from stem to stern, one sheet of flame. The fire broke out in the spirit-room—at least the Board of Trade said so—and she blew up, and her crew of nineteen went down, all except me. 'Did I ever founder?'

I've had three gone down under me, and rotten old tubs they were. 'Was I ever run down?' Yes, I was. I've been very unfortunate that way. Some of my crafts *would* get across the bows of a big steamship, or perhaps, a China clipper, and then there was damages, for I never yet lost a craft that way, but the other vessel was in fault. 'Was I ever ruined by it?' No; I always come off one of them unfortunate voyages with more money than I went on board with. 'Was my owners ruined?' I've sailed for the same house fifteen year, and never a voyage I made but my owner made money by. 'Was the underwriters ruined?' Perhaps." Here he winked on Tom with a horrible leer.

"You and your owner have been singularly unfortunate, I should say," Tom said, feeling while he spoke the most intense disgust at his companion, and a strong desire to throw him through the window.

"Me and my owner unfortunate, you say!" the captain continued, as he rolled his quid in his cheek. "You're out of your reckoning there, mate. I start on my last voyage with nothing but my kit, and I've got a thousand pound this minute. When that's gone, my owner will put me afloat again. He began in Liverpool twenty year ago with nothing, and he's worth sixty thousand this minute if he's got a penny. The *Joseph and Mary* was my last craft. A floating coffin they called her in Liverpool. My owner insured her in London for ten thousand and her freight in ten. She cost fifteen hundred, and went down a month ago off the Lizard. Is that the way to ruin my owner? I fancy not. Did the insurance offices catch it? Rather."

Tom was as pale as a sheet. "The villain is a wholesale murderer," he thought; "or perhaps he is only mad drunk and has a touch of D.T." So he said, "A great many lives must have been lost in those unhappy adventures of yours."

Captain Waters glanced round the carriage furtively, and a look of terror passed, like a shadow, across his face, and made itself unmistakeably visible in his eyes. But it was gone in a moment.

"Yes," he said, "I've seen many a strapping feller fling his arms up, give a shriek, and go down. That's the worst of it! I hear 'em every night, and nothing will put 'em out of my hearing but this." And he slapped the pocket which held his flask with a brawny hand. "I hear 'em shriek, I tell you, and see 'em go down as plain as ever I see 'em in my life. But never mind. I can always have plenty of brandy, and with a bottle of the real sort I'd face the devil. 'Do my owner ever hear 'em or see 'em?' Not he! he's a respectable looking gent as you'd see on the Exchange, and goes Psalm-singing regular every Sunday, and subscribes to home missions, and charities, and the Sailors' Home. He's the very old one, he is. 'What's his name?' That's a question, that is! I've been pretty free spoken already. Never mind! I never yet said one day what I couldn't unsay another. One man's word is as good as another's when there's no witnesses. I say, mate, are you good at guessing?"

"I'm afraid not," Tom replied.

"Try. What does P stand for, eh?" said Captain Waters, with a half-cunning, half-savage look in his grey eyes.

"It may stand for lots of things," Tom replied.

"Parson, priest, parish, poor, powder, plague—the deuce! eh?" said the captain.

"I believe it may stand for any one of them," Tom replied. "But here we are at Peterborough. I'm afraid I must now deprive myself of your very pleasant company." And the train having stopped he got out, and the guard removed his luggage to another carriage.

When he was some half-dozen paces from the carriage in which Captain Waters was beguiling the tedium of the journey, and endeavouring to shut out the shrieks of drowning men by an unceasing attention to his flask, which he had got refilled, that gallant British sailor put his head through the window and shouted out, "Hi! mate, here! Does P stand for parson? Perhaps so. Does P stand for Parkes? Yes. What cheer then, my hearty! Take the advice of a plain and honest sailor, and never take a passage or ship a freight, unless insured, in a craft as is owned by Parkes and Co., and be d—d to you!"

While Captain Jack Waters was thus relating to Tom a few incidents in his virtuous career, another little scene, in which some of the characters mentioned in this story were the actors, was taking place in the neighbourhood of the lion on the top of Northumberland House. At Number 3, Northumberland Court, directly underneath the shadow of the British lion's tail, Mrs. Vanderspek let apartments to single gentlemen. On Mrs. Vanderspek's third floor, a young gentleman of the greatest fashion had taken up his abode eighteen months previously, and had paid his weekly ten shillings rent with the most praiseworthy

regularity. His suite of apartments—for Mrs. Vanderspek always referred to them as a suite, and the young gentleman fell into the same habit—consisted of a tolerably large room, having two windows and an extensive view of the chimney pots on the other side, and a small cupboard on the landing in which his coals were kept. The principal room of the suite had to serve both as sitting and bed room. A nice little alcove was in that room, which in daytime was covered with a faded red damask curtain, but which disclosed when the curtains were withdrawn as comfortable a little bed as any bachelor need rest on. In fact, as Mr. Samuel Maggs, junior, observed—for the tenant of that suite of apartments was none other than Sam—"the room was big enough for anything, and it was very handy to get up from the fire and step straight into bed; the attendance was good, and altogether the diggings were very comfortable and cheap."

On this particular morning Sam lay in bed rather late to make up for the hours stolen from sleep the preceding night. He had been invited to a little supper with half a dozen ladies and gentlemen of the Adelphi Theatre, and had partaken a little too freely of champagne. The consequence was that when he got out of bed his head felt ready to split, his eyes were as heavy as lead, and his tongue like a nutmeg grater. This was decidedly unpleasant, and as he had not yet acquired a taste for soda, he was consequently out of humour, and thought that the stage, the drama, the whole of London, and himself in particular, were going to the deuce.

Northumberland Court is not quite as wide as

Piccadilly. Indeed, the houses on one side always appeared to Sam as if they were shaking hands with those on the other. The windows on this side were exactly on a level with those on the other, and a person standing in one of Sam's could see into the room of his neighbour over the way. In this manner Sam had made a few acquaintances, while adorning himself in the mornings. He was on speaking terms with the gentleman directly opposite. They had shaved in sight of each other for months, and with the same success, or rather, want of it. At the same moment, as if by signal, they had anointed their cheeks and upper lips with the "Balm of Gilead," one bottle of which is warranted to produce a splendid crop of whiskers. Their shirt collars were buttoned, and their wristbands were pulled down, as though each of them was but the reflection of the other. This could not go on for ever without something coming of it. At first they stared at each other, then bowed, and finally they conversed across the court, while at their respective toilets, on the current topics of the day. Then there was the young lady who lived in the house farther down. She parted her back hair at the same moment Sam was making the top of his head red hot with a brush in each hand. The result was they smiled, they bowed, they kissed hands, and Maria Libby, known as Mademoiselle Eulalie Montmorency at the Theatre Royal, where she attended to dance, weaved a charming little romance in her mind, the hero of which was a prince, or at least a marquis (markiss, Maria pronounced it,) incog., who would presently propose to her, and carry her off to his ancestral towers in a coach-and-six with out-

riders, and that prince or marquis was Samuel Maggs, Esquire.

On this morning, then, everybody in Northumberland Court seemed late in getting up. The gentleman and the lady opposite were late, and were just beginning *their* toilets when Sam began his. This coincidence did not put him in good spirits, nor allay his ill-humour. He frowned at Mademoiselle Eulalie, and snarled across the court at the young gentleman. He cut himself in shaving, and his hair would not part properly. There was not starch enough in his collars, and his boots were badly cleaned, and altogether life seemed a blank, and there was nothing worth living for. But, nevertheless, he took more than ordinary care in adorning his person. Three or four neckties of magnificent patterns were tried on and thrown aside. He had a long argument with himself whether he should wear his loose unmentionables or his tight ones, finally, however, giving the preference to the latter, as they would display the shape of his legs to advantage. It took him another quarter of an hour, and an immense deal of posing before his small looking-glass, to decide whether his coat should be worn buttoned up or open. Having a new set of mother-of-pearl buttons to his vest, however, he determined to wear it open. At length, having placed the diamond and pearl pin which Mr. Seedly had given him in a conspicuous position in his shirt front, and a small garnet ring on his finger, he armed himself with an attenuated umbrella, which had several extensive rents down the creases of the silk, and two broken ribs—but as Sam observed, "It didn't

matter, as it was wrapped up and was not intended to be opened out, and no one would know but what it was perfectly sound in every respect—and stepped through the narrow entrance to the court into the Strand.

Everyone knows that the distance from Northumberland Court to Northumberland Street is but a minute's walk, and yet at least half-an-hour elapsed before Sam knocked at Number 79. Four times he walked from the bottom of the street to the top and back again, and four times he held the brass knocker of Number 79 in his hand without lifting it. This could not have been uncertainty, for he had many times rattled a tattoo on that door. We question very much whether it was bashfulness, for certain reasons well known to us. We are rather inclined to think that Mr. Maggs was nervous. We do know he had determined to hazard a statement and make certain inquiries that morning, which the young lady who resided opposite Sam would have called "popping the question."

At length he mustered courage, and feebly hammered at the door. "Was Miss Zulmann at home?" he inquired.

"Yes, she was," the girl who opened the door informed him. "Would he step up?"

"Well, yes! he thought he would. That is, he didn't mind if it was not disturbing her."

The girl assured him Miss Zulmann was alone. And with uncertain steps, and a terrible sinking under the left side of his magnificent waistcoat, Sam mounted the stairs, and was shown into the room where Marion was reading.

Sam blushed and went pale, felt burning hot and then cold, and experienced all those physical symptoms so well known to most of us. And, indeed, he might be excused for losing his strength and his wit in the presence of that imperial beauty. The present writer has known men considerably older and of more worldly experience than Sam become infinitely more asinine in the presence of women not fit to carry Marion's shoes behind her.

"Good morning, Sam!" she said, holding out her hand to him. "I suppose you are come to talk over our prospects at Liverpool."

"Ye—yes, certainly!" Sam replied, stammering, and polishing his best hat with the sleeve of his coat. "Oh, certainly! Just what I came for. I like—I mean, I want—that is, I hope you are pretty well, thank you."

"*I'm* very well, but I don't think *you* are, Sam," Marion said, looking at the young fellow, who indeed had a most interesting look of dissipation. "I'm sure you're not well, sir. See! your hand shakes as no young man's hand should shake, and you have dark circles under your eyes. You are becoming addicted to bad habits, I'm afraid, Sam. I don't so much allude to your smoking. You indulge in other amusements worse than that. Shall I order you some tea?"

"It isn't tea I want," Sam replied in a miserable tone. "Tea has no charms for me." And he drew the most prolonged sigh that was ever heard.

"Yes, it is tea you want," Marion said severely. "If you drank nothing but tea, you wouldn't look so miserable as you've been doing lately. What time

did you get home last night? Mind you tell the truth."

"It was a little late, I'm afraid," Sam answered.

"Anyone could guess that by looking at you," said Marion. "But what time was it?"

"Quarter-past three this morning," he sighed.

"Good gracious! And where had you been, sir!" she asked.

"I took supper with a few friends after leaving the theatre," Sam replied somewhat indistinctly, for the handle of his umbrella was occupying the greater part of his mouth. "I know it's wrong and all that, Marion, but it's all of you."

"All of me, was it, you stupid boy?" she said, as the colour deepened on her lovely face. "It's my opinion you're losing your wits, as you've lost your recollection of your grammar."

"No, Marion! dearest Marion!" gasped Sam, flopping down on his knees, and narrowly escaping an awful catastrophe to his tight trousers. "It's all through you. I love you so, you can't think how miserable I am. You can't imagine how much I adore you. I've loved you ever since I could walk. I wish I was a dook, I would lay my—my what-do-you-call'em at your feet. I'd say, Oh, lovely Marion, be a dookess—I mean, my duchess. Ever of thee I'm fondly dreaming—that is, when Nature's soft nurse seals up my eyelids, which isn't very often. Night after night I lie awake and dream of you. Dear Marion, say you love me *only a little bit!* I ain't greedy!"

While Sam was thus giving vent to his passion, Marion stood, with an ominous frown on her face,

tapping the room carpet with her foot—a movement, it is believed, which generally indicates that somebody will catch it. When he had finished or stopped to take breath, she exclaimed, with considerable asperity, "Sam, get up, and don't make yourself ridiculous!"

"It's all through—" Sam began, but she interrupted him.

"I won't hear another word," she said. "Get up, and have some strong tea here, or go home and ask Mrs. Vanderspek for some."

"Then you refuse me?" Sam said.

"Of course I do, you stupid. I believe you're tipsy now," she replied.

"Very well, then! the die is cast!" he said, rising from his knees. "The die is cast. But no matter! They want a few fine young men in the Guards. I'll enlist, and drown my cares in the flowing bowl or in the arms of Mars!"

"You'll do nothing of the sort," she answered. "You are only five feet six, and they'll not take you. Sam, you're a fool!"

CHAPTER XI.

When Tom arrived in London he first drove to the hotel to which Mr. Seedly had recommended him, and after changing his dress for a costume more suitable to the metropolis, dined at the Somerset Tavern, and then lit a cigar and walked to Northumberland Street. Marion was at home when he called. He had expected to see the same young girl he had laughed and quarrelled with two years previously, and was somewhat abashed when a tall and exceedingly beautiful young woman met him at the door of the little room he was shown into, with outstretched hands, a bright smile, and a burning blush on her face. And he had altered too, Marion thought. He had left them quite a lad, and now she saw before her a tall, broad-shouldered, sunburnt, and rather good-looking young man. This feeling of surprise, it is believed, is common enough. We leave acquaintances and friends, and after a few years, return to find those whom we remembered little children in the nursery grown up to be men and women, and those who, when we were among them, were in the prime of manhood and womanhood, grown into old men and women, without

reflecting that Time has wrought similar changes in us, and that *our* eyes, which in the old days were bright, have become dim; that lines and furrows have made their appearance on *our* cheeks, which once were smooth; and that *our* old heads, which had been conspicuous for their luxurious locks, are now shiny and bald.

"Marion," Tom said, taking both the hands held out to him in his, "I should scarcely have known you. When I left all our old friends in Hulme Terrace you were quite a young girl, and now you are a—a—young woman."

"I am not the only one who has changed," she replied, smiling, and placing a chair for him near her. "Sit here, Tom, or Mr. Seedly, I suppose, I must call you now."

"I don't see why you should," Tom said, sitting down by her. "I hope I shall always be Tom to you, as you will always be Marion to me. I don't think I could bring myself to call you Miss Zulmann."

"I hope you won't," she said. "I would rather be called Marion by you, and I'd rather call you Tom, if I may. But I suppose we have both changed and grown, though I don't think you have altered in any other respect. Indeed, I'm sure you have not, or you would not be here now. When I wrote you yesterday, I felt sure you would come, but not so soon."

"I started as soon as I had your letter," Tom replied. "I was very grieved to get it. I don't mean," he continued laughing, "that I was grieved to receive your letter, but grieved at what you say

of Sam. Indeed I can scarcely think but that you must be mistaken."

"Indeed I'm not," Marion said. "He was here this morning and looked dreadfully ill and dissipated. I'm sure he smokes too much, and keeps late hours, and he might choose better or steadier friends than those he goes with. Sam is very clever in some things, and I believe he will become a great actor. But in one or two other things, not connected with the profession, he's a regular ninny, and a weak-minded stupid. There!"

"Oh, he smokes, does he?" said Tom, laughing. "What a dissipated young rascal. So I must lecture him on the evils of smoking, must I? How fortunate you were not looking through the window just now when I threw away my cigar."

"You needn't be satirical, Tom!" she answered. "I suppose excess is bad in smoking as in other things. I say Sam smokes too much. It doesn't follow that *you* do. I don't think you do. If you did, you wouldn't look so—so healthy. Now this morning, while he was here, I couldn't help noticing how pale he looked. And his hand shook like an old man's."

"That's a bad sign, I acknowledge," Tom said, nodding towards her. "But it don't always come of smoking. A bad night's rest—being up later than usual—nervousness—fifty things may account for it. It is possible he indulges too much in tobacco, but I should hardly think it probable. I once saw Sam suffer rather severely from that indulgence. In fact, I shared both the tobacco and the consequences with him. It made us both very ill, and

Sam did not appear to like it. It even cured him, temporarily, at any rate, of an attachment he had formed in those days. It occurred after a little disagreement we had with you in Mr. Drust's library."

"I recollect it very well," she replied, blushing. "I'm afraid I showed some temper that afternoon. I remember how ill you both looked when you came down to tea. My mamma was there. It was one of her visits, which were never frequent, and are now even less so. But to return to what we were saying. All the causes you mention for Sam's appearance are there. Last night he spent with some people of the theatre—second and third rate persons—in eating more lobster-salad and drinking more bad champagne than was good for him. He tells me he did not get home until three o'clock this morning. And then I'm sure he was nervous. How could he be otherwise after wasting the hours in that manner which he ought to have spent in bed?"

"But this hadn't occurred when you wrote me," said Tom. "You must have written yesterday morning and this took place last night."

"I know that," she replied. "But I daresay it was not the first night he has spent in the same way. He has been looking ill, and talking nonsense, for months. And then he says—something very silly and stupid as to the cause of it."

"I think I know," Tom said, wagging his head, and smiling on her. "He has been going on in this fashion for the same reason he smoked too much once before. Isn't that it, Marion?"

"How should I know why he smoked too much on the occasion you refer to?" she replied, blushing deeply, however, as though she did understand the reason perfectly. "I only know that he has been giving way to bad habits for some time past, and that he says it is all through me."

"You haven't been showing him a bad example, I hope?" Tom said, waggishly. "'Pon my word, Marion, you must take care what you are about. Young fellows are very imitative, you know."

"Now you are talking nonsense," she replied. "You know very well what I mean. The fact is, Sam is very foolish and stupid."

"You said that before," Tom remarked, smiling. "Now tell me what he has been doing or saying. Why does he lay the blame of his little dissipations on you?"

"Tom," she replied, "you are as bad as Sam. You know very well what I refer to. Sam is just as silly as he was when—when you two smoked yourselves ill in Hulme Terrace."

"Then I suppose he has not quite got over that attachment we were speaking about?" Tom remarked.

"You may call it what you like," Marion said, stamping her pretty foot on the old carpet. "I call it stupidity. I've told him so, and I won't listen to him. Every time he comes here, and begins his nonsensical talk, I refuse to listen to him."

"Then he has been talking to you on that subject," Tom said. "I suppose I may assume, then, that Sam is desperately smitten with a certain

young lady, and has been making love to her. Am I right in my assumption, Marion?"

"I suppose you are," she answered, laughing, and dropping her eyes before his. "*I* can't help it. I'm sure I snub him, and——"

"And bully him," Tom put in. "I remember you used to bully both of us most unmercifully."

"Well, we'll say I've bullied him, if you choose," she replied, "though it's a word I don't like. I've scolded him, and put myself in a passion with him, but he comes with the same tale again. And when I tell him he's acting foolishly, and making himself ill with his late hours and queer acquaintances, he tells me it's all *my* fault, as if I could help it. He has been here this morning, and after going on in the usual manner, informed me that he should enlist and drown his cares in the flowing bowl, if you know what that is. I don't think he's very—very much hurt," she continued, with a blush, "or he would not talk so absurdly. Indeed, half the time he is talking to me on *that* subject, it seems to me he's acting a part in a broad farce."

"Poor old Sam!" Tom said.

"Poor old fiddlesticks!" that young lady continued, pettishly. "I've no patience with him. You must talk him out of it, Tom. He not only calls here three or four times a week on the same errand, but inundates me with letters, and actually sends a lot of rubbish which he calls poetry."

"Indeed!" said Tom, blushing in his turn, for it must be confessed he too had been courting the muses of late, and had spoiled many sheets of paper in trying to find a word other than the name of a

certain personage not mentioned in polite society to rhyme with Revell. "Would it be improper of me to ask if I might see some of Sam's effusions?"

"I have but two here," she replied. "You can see them if you like. And if, after you have read them, you are not of opinion he has taken leave of his senses, I shall be surprised. They came this afternoon, and finer specimens of idiocy *I* never read. Here they are. All his other rubbish I've made spills of. They will do to light the candles with, or your cigar if you wish very much to smoke, but they're fit for nothing else." And she handed to him two sheets of highly-scented letter paper, on one of which was written the following:—

"THIS VOLUME OF POEMS IS INSCRIBED
TO
A HEARTLESS MAIDEN FAIR,
WHO INSPIRES A HOPELESS PASSION
IN THE MANLY BOSOM OF
A DEVOTED ADMIRER,
WHO HAS POSITIVELY MADE UP HIS MIND
TO CONQUER OR
TO DIE.

"Oh, lovely young maiden, whose name it is Marion,
The heart in this bosom beats fondly and true;
What though my hurt feelings should urge me to carry on
In a very wild manner, it's all, dear, of you.

"'Tis true, dear, my fond heart for you is a-thirsting;
In visions of night it is your face I see;
And when I get up my bosom feels bursting,
And when I lie down I dream ever of thee.

"In fact, I feel certain, away I am pining;
The music-hall pleasures I've sounded in vain;
My appetite's left me— I care not for dining——

"I regret to say that in the agony of the present moment I can find no word to rhyme with vain, except rain, and this would be inappropriate, as the weather is exceedingly fine, and more suggestive of white waistcoats (of which I have two) than umbrellas. But more anon. Farewell! When I am no more, think sometimes kindly of me. Again farewell! farewell! *pro tem.*"

"Now, then," she said, when Tom returned Sam's production to her, "if you don't call that strong evidence of his being crazy, I don't know what to think. This isn't the only one by many. He has sent fifty of a similar nature. The other one here, I think, is even more silly."

Tom lay back in his chair and laughed until the tears ran down his face, and a pain in the back of his head warned him to compose himself. The highly sounding inscription amused him. Tom in his highest flights of fancy never soared so high as to inscribe a volume of poems to his charmer. The apology for not completing the last verse amused him, for though the writer intimated very plainly he was very hard hit by the little blind archer, yet he was at the same time fully alive to the beauties of his personal raiment. But the "Farewell! farewell! *pro tem.*," amused him more than all.

"He gives you some hope after all!" he said, when he had ceased laughing. "He may return. Don't you see how considerate Sam is of your feelings? The *pro tem.* intimates that it is just possible he may not die just yet, and that, in case he should continue living, you may perhaps see him yet once more."

"Tom, you needn't laugh," Marion replied, laughing herself by the way, for the young fellow's smile was pleasant and infectious. "It's no laughing

matter for me to be tormented in this manner, let me tell you. I don't like it, and I won't have it; there now."

"Was it to tell Sam he mustn't admire you that you bid me come?" Tom asked, with a smile. "I'm afraid it will be useless. You know the old song," and he began to hum in his rich voice, "If ever I cease to love——"

"No, it was not to tell him that, for I have told him myself. What I want you to do is to persuade him to give up his bad habits. If our old friends at home—for I call Hulme Terrace *home* still—were to know how he was going on they would be much grieved," she replied.

"I'll see what I can do," Tom said, "but I doubt if it will be of any use. Advice is seldom taken in such cases, Marion, and is sometimes resented."

"You can but try, at any rate," Marion replied. "And now I daresay you are longing to smoke. You may have one cigar if you like, but not more. And while you are smoking it, you can tell me all about yourself."

So Tom lit a cigar, after some pressing, and told her of his manner of living; of the places he had visited on the Continent, and of Mr. Seedly's kindness and affection for him. He did not tell her *all* about himself, though. What young fellow ever does? There were certain hopes of which he never spoke to anyone, a face of which he dreamed, castles in the air which he was continually building. And these fancies he kept to himself, and admitted no sharer in them. They were too delicious to speak of. A

sharer in them would have soiled them. So Tom said nothing of his visits to Chirkwell Cottage, nor even referred in the most casual manner to the ladies who resided, and squabbled, and schemed, and set their lures for him, in those bowers of happiness.

"Did he intend entering on any profession?" she inquired.

No, he did not at present, at any rate, contemplate that step. His uncle, Mr. Seedly, wished him to live as a country gentleman, and he confessed he liked that way of life. His lines were cast in pleasant places, and he was not going to tempt fortune by entering on a race in which he would have little to gain and a great deal to lose. "If I entered on a profession," he said, "what years of labour and unremitting study there would be before me. And even suppose I should in time succeed, what better off should I be than I am now? I have enough to satisfy a higher ambition than mine," he said, with a magnificent wave of his cigar. "My uncle is comparatively wealthy, and two years ago my highest ambition never aspired to more than a modest salary under a mining company. But suppose I should enter on a career and fail. Do you think I could then go home, and feel no bruise, no wound from the strife? Would there be no heartburnings, no regrets, no envy of others more fortunate? I should not like to risk it. I have seen men who have been failures in the world—men who had wealth and a name before they entered on their careers—come out of the fight broken, bent, and soured. I should not like to be like one of them. I shall live as my uncle

is living. We shall hunt a little in the season, fish a little," and here the young rascal blushed, for he thought of his fishing excursions at home, never dreaming however that *he* was the fish being caught, "and come to town to the horse and cattle shows, and see you and Sam astonish the London world, when you make your appearance as Romeo and Juliet. And I shall go to Covent Garden, and buy a cabful of bouquets to shower on you when you are called before the curtain. What a Romeo Sam will make! He's sure to *feel* his part, isn't he?"

"I've no doubt but he will enter into any part he may be cast for with heart and soul," she replied. "Though Sam is a—a fool in some things—and no one knows it better than I—yet he will be a great actor."

"I'm sure of that," Tom said. "You will be two stars, or I shall be disappointed. When do you make your début at Liverpool?"

"Early next month," she replied. "We are engaged by the same manager. I daresay when the London season commences we shall come to town again. Indeed, it is almost settled, for an engagement is open to us at the Royal Theatre. I hope you will be there, Tom, whenever it may be. The face of one old friend among such a sea of faces will help *me*, at any rate, to stand the ordeal."

"I shall be certain to be there," he said, looking at the beautiful girl opposite him, and wondering if she would ever marry, and whom. And as this thought crossed his mind, something like a frown passed over his face, and he felt at once he should dislike that man whoever he might be.

This may at first seem strange, considering that Tom was already far gone in adoration of another woman, who though her charms were stale and faded, and who compared to Marion was as a last month's flower to a newly-gathered blush-rose with the morning's dew upon it, was his heart's queen, his peerless charmer. But the workings of the human heart are strange. Besides, consider before you condemn Tom, whether in so doing you may not be pronouncing your own condemnation. Have not you, my dear young sir, felt you should like to punch your friend's head for making love to Arabella, when at the same time you are fondly attached and engaged to Betsy Jane? Tom did not fancy that Marion would ever marry his friend Sam, and so his friendship for that misguided young man remained unaltered; but he did feel he should like to punch the head of that other man, whoever he might be, who should, with any chance of success, aspire to the beautiful girl near him, and he determined that he would remain in town for a few days longer than he had at first intended, and visit the Surrey Slasher again.

"Yes," he continued, "I'll be there, Marion. I've no doubt now but that you will have many other admirers than Sam. But if any of them annoy you—not that I think they would dare, you know, for the man a beautiful woman can't set down must be a queer one—just let me know, and *I'll* let him see what o'clock it is, very soon." And he twirled the ends of his little moustache with such an air that Marion thought him a perfect young Apollo and Mars in one.

"I don't think anyone will," she said. "If I were in any danger there is no one I would fly to sooner than to you, Tom." And she looked at the lad in such a manner that even the dullest and least conceited young fellow in the world could have guessed her secret. But Tom's eyes were blinded with his own visions, and he only saw a blushing young beauty before him, whom he thought he loved like a sister, but whom he, nevertheless, felt he should like to remain unwooed and unwon. So he took her hand in his, and smoothed and petted it, every touch he gave it making her thrill and tremble with new sensations and emotions. And he said, "That's right, Marion. You trust in your old schoolfellow; I'll stand by you, should you ever need it, through thick and thin."

How far this conversation might have gone on, or to what little confidences it might have led, it is impossible to conjecture, had not the servant girl made her appearance to say that Mrs. Piper was waiting tea below. They might have talked until even Tom, dull and blind as he was, discovered Marion's regard for him. Or it might have resulted in his own eyes being opened to the value of the treasure which was his unasked, and to the comparative worthlessness of that hothouse passion which had been cuddled, and nursed, and fanned into a flame, and kept alive as tender hothouse plants are kept alive, in that forcing-house of love down at Chirkwell, where so many plants had been watered with adulatory incense and humbug, and had failed to take root after all, and so saved him, and her, and everybody concerned a great deal of misery

and unhappiness, and have brought this history to an end, for novels always end when the hero or heroine is happily settled and done for. But Mrs. Piper was waiting for them below, and Mr. Piper, who supplemented his labours and his income as a messenger in Somerset House by blacking his lodgers' boots, and acting as an occasional butler at night at certain great houses in the neighbourhood of Mayfair, was waiting too for *his* tea, as he had an engagement that evening at the West-end. So Tom consented to stop to tea, and descended to the underground apartment in which the Pipers, old and young, refreshed themselves, to the astonishment, not to say dismay of that worthy couple and their seven pledges of affection. But he complimented Mr. Piper on his appointment, and Mrs. Piper on her children, and altogether made himself so agreeable that his pleasant manners and good looks made him quite a favourite, as his magnificent jewellery and raiment, and his casual mention of his bay mare, made him an object of awe and veneration to them. But great and magnificent as he was, Mr. Piper thought it behoved him, for the honour of the department of which he was the pride and ornament, to be even more so. That little man, who, when stretched to his utmost height, might possibly reach to Tom's shoulder, spoke in the most intimate manner of many great individuals of whom Tom had read and heard. Mr. Piper was intimately connected, officially, of course, with the Chancellor of the Exchequer. That little man appeared to have been consulted on all matters connected with finance for a great number of years.

"Me and Sir William, our chairman, you know, sir, did the trick. He says to me, says he, 'Mr. Piper, I leave the question in your hands, knowing as I do, it will be done well. You *must* do it, Piper,' says he; 'the country expects you'll do it; the Chancellor of the Exchequer expects you'll do it.' Says I, 'Leave it all to me, Sir William, and there you are.'"

Whether Mr. Piper believed in the lies he was telling, the present writer has had no means of discovering. He believes he did. His wife believed in them implicity, and was certain some awful catastrophe would happen to the country, if her "Harthur" was not to the fore. The little man told the same lies in the same words to many other people: to the tradesmen with whom he dealt; to the gorgeous individuals in plush and buttons whom he was in the habit of meeting at the great houses; and even to the servants in Sir William's kitchen, when that astute statesman gave a dinner-party, on which occasions "my man, Piper," generally officiated in the capacity of butler. So it is possible Mr. Piper did believe himself to be a pillar of the State. We are confirmed in this opinion by the fact that a certain high official in the Post Office, after telling himself for a number of years that the London letter-carriers are a highly-paid class of public servants, now really believes it. After this, who can doubt but that in time a man can persuade himself to believe anything, no matter how improbable or absurd? We cannot. We come down from the high horse we have been riding, and say, "Piper, you are a man and a brother. You are trustworthy

in your official, and virtuous in your private life. And if you are of an imaginative turn, your lies hurt no one, and please yourself, your wife, your little ones. Good-bye, Piper; we shall see no more of you in this history."

When Tom took his leave of Mr. Piper and his amiable family, Marion accompanied him to the door, and watched him until he turned the corner of the street into the Strand, and then went back to the little sitting-room, and gave herself up to the enjoyment of those pleasant fancies which young people give themselves up to, before they have learned the hard lesson taught of disappointed hopes and bruised hearts. And there we shall leave her for the time, building *her* castles in the air, and painting pleasant pictures of the future, the central figure of which was the tall, handsome young fellow who had just left her, and accompany Tom to Northumberland Court.

Mrs. Vanderspek let him in, and informed him that "de gentleman was in his room, and dat he seems fery bads," and requested him to walk up.

Tom walked up to the third story, and on knocking at Sam's door, was requested to come in. On entering the room, he found that love-lorn youth with his coat and waistcoat off, and his shirt-sleeves turned up, feeling the muscles of his arm, and examining himself before the looking-glass.

"How do you do, sir?" Sam said, bending his right arm, and looking at that part of it where the muscle ought to be. "You have the advantage of me, for I don't recollect you. But if you remember having seen me in my prime of manhood, you will

be shocked at the skeleton I have become. I have been a fine young man in my time, sir, but have been brought down by sickness and disappointment, and—and circumstances over which I had no control. But no matter. What can I do for you, sir ? "

Tom began to laugh. " What, Sam ! " he said, " don't you know me ? "

" Methinks I recognise that voice," he said in deep tones, looking at his old friend. " Those features seem familiar to my eye. Is it—can it be Tom ? "

" No other," Tom replied. " And now, Sam, you know who I am, perhaps you'll shake hands. As your father used to say, aren't we brothers all ? "

" Certainly," Sam said, seizing Tom's hand and wringing it hard. " How are you, old feller ? I'm delighted to see you. Never saw a feller grow like you. You're big enough for the Guards." The mention of the guards, however, having recalled to him his determination to enlist in that gallant regiment, and the reason of that determination following as a matter of course, he folded his bare arms across his chest, and turning his head over his right shoulder, he continued in a less jovial voice, " But no, I recall my wrongs. Is a blighted heart to stand for nothing ? Excuse me, Tom—Mr. Seedly—I regret I shook hands with you. Give me back that sign of friendship ; consider your hand ungrasped ; the welcome into which you surprised me ungiven. I own your face recalled to my mind old times, when we were boys together. I remembered we had shared the same bed, you getting the

biggest half and most of the clothes, which was hard upon me, who never wronged you, especially in cold weather, when an extra blanket is more than welcome. I remembered our dining at the same table, our eating of the same crust, of which, again, you usually got the biggest half, for you were always a hearty feeder. I remembered we went up the same chimblies, I always getting the smallest and the hottest, by reason of your being big of limb. I remembered—I remembered all this and a good deal more, and the first instincts of a noble heart," and here he slapped his breast three or four times, "a noble heart, sir, which, though blighted, and—and—but no matter if I am sometimes incoherent, for I have suffered. I grasped your hand, and my bosom beat responsive to the call of friendship. But you have crossed my path. You have wounded me, stabbed me in my—my—ah!—my feelings, and we are strangers now for aye, and I can never give the hand where the heart can never be."

While Sam was thus pouring out his feelings, Tom was reclining against the door of the room, quietly laughing. Sam did not see his amused looks, his head being turned towards the window the whole time, or the ridiculousness of his words might have struck him too. When he had finished, however, and solemnly declared he could never give his hand where his heart could never be, Tom took him in his strong grasp by the shoulders, and shaking him until he shook his head straight, he looked laughing into his eyes, and said, "You old humbug! what are you talking about?"

Sam was not accustomed to such rough exercise as this, and the little wind bad tobacco and worse champagne had left him was shaken out of him. When he regained his breath, however, he struggled feebly to free himself from the powerful grasp of his friend, but without success. Tom held him firmly, and laughing in his face, asked him what the deuce he meant by his nonsense.

"Sir!" Sam gasped, "unhand me. You took me unawares, or you never would have held me. I may be brought down by my trials, but I am muscular still. In fact, I'm strong as a lion."

"Then sit down, you old stupid," Tom said, forcing him into a chair. "What the deuce is the matter with you? You've been having too much beer with your dinner, I believe!"

"I have not," Sam replied. "But you have laid violent hands, sir, on a Maggs. You have now obliterated all remembrance of Hulme Terrace. I spared you just now for the sake of the times that once were. But now we'll see. I regret I have no swords with which we might settle our differences, and pistols would alarm Mrs. Vanderspek and bring the police. I don't like the police. They are rude and overbearing, and from circumstances which I needn't mention, I am aware a lodging on the cold, cold ground of a cell, in which those minions of the law sometimes confine gentlemen, is not to be thought of. But I *am* inclined to have a round with you, so come on."

Instead of rising from his chair, and putting himself in that attitude which boxers assume, and which was once said, by a great authority on such affairs,

to be everything, Sam sat perfectly still, and seemed anything but inclined to have the round he referred to. This could not have been through fear, for in after days he was in the habit of assuring Tom he could have thrashed his head off on that occasion. Neither could it have been through a knowledge of personal weakness, for he had just informed him he was as strong as a lion. We can then only account for his forbearance by assuming that he pitied the other youth's, and did not wish to lay him up and put him to the expense of a doctor during his stay in town. He contented himself then, with scowling at Tom, who was not the least alarmed, but who, on the contrary, appeared to look on the whole affair as something intensely amusing.

"Now, old fellow," he began, as he laid his big brown hand on the other's knee.

"Don't old feller me!" Sam replied, shifting his leg, and frowning at the ceiling. "I'm not going to be old fellered by a traitor."

"Yes, I shall," Tom said, laughing. "I shall call you old fellow. Now what *is* all this row about? How can I have offended you, when I haven't seen you for two years?"

"You know very well, Tom—sir, I mean," Sam replied, slapping his breast with his hand. "You know you have wounded me in my tenderest part, and trampled on my holiest feelings. Don't prevaricate. But no matter. I can bear it." And he dashed his hand across his brow, and finally let it rest over his eyes, a remarkably striking attitude, which it must be confessed he had practised before the looking-glass, intending to have used it that

morning in his interview with Marion, only in the nervousness of the moment he had forgotten it until he had left her, when it was too late.

"'Pon my word, I am quite ignorant of having done anything to offend you," Tom said.

"No, no, I cannot believe it," the other said, in a soliloquy. "He mocks me; the traitor mocks me." Then turning to Tom, he continued, "Sir, impossible. I may be young; I may be green; I may be innocent; but not so young, so green, so innocent as to believe that. You know where my—my young affections are placed?"

"I think I do!" Tom replied, wagging his head, knowingly. "You take care to let everybody know, Sam, my boy."

"Perhaps so! but no matter!" Sam went on. "Knowing where my young affections are placed, you yet trample on them—you undermine me in her esteem—you—you go and cut me out. That's about what you have done. And that's what I should like to punch your head for, and would too, but for the memory of days gone by never to be recalled."

"You are a confounded young fool, Sam," Tom said, blushing. "You have no business to speak of her like that, for she has never given you reason to say what you have said."

"Ha! I touch you there, do I?" Sam replied, starting up from his chair. "She has given me no reason, hasn't she? I tell you, traitor, she loves you. For you she has scorned this honest heart." And he again slapped his shirt front. "For you—for you—here, hands off, or I'll call the police. By Jove, I will."

Tom had risen from his chair, and his pleasant smile was gone. In its place a frown had come like a dark cloud, and a wicked look shone out from his grey eyes. To hear a woman lightly discussed angered him at any time; but his chivalrous heart was in a flame to hear Marion, whom he vowed to himself he loved as a sister, spoken of as Sam had spoken of her. Sam had some reason for being frightened, and for using the threat of calling in the police, for Tom's hand was on his shoulder, and his stern face close to the other's, as he said, "You confounded young ass. Have you spoken of her in this manner to anyone else?"

"No! no! never," Sam gasped.

"Then don't," Tom said, gripping Sam's shoulder until he winced. "If ever you do, I'll give you such a belting as you never dreamed of in your life. You ought to be ashamed of yourself. Neither Marion nor I ever dreamed of such a thing."

"Do you mean to tell me you aren't in love with her?" Sam asked, rubbing his shoulder where Tom had grasped him.

"Certainly not, in the way you mean," Tom replied.

"Then I forgive you, Tom," Sam said, seizing the other lad's hand. "I forgive you. I give you the honest grasp of friendship, and brothers all it is. You will forget all I have said, Tom. I may talk wildly—madly at times. I love her so very, very—confoundedly, that I am not always master of myself. She laughs at me, and calls me a stoopid. I may be stoopid—but I'm true. Reams and reams of paper have I covered with verses to her. Look," he con-

tinued, taking a sheet of foolscap—a size singularly appropriate under the circumstances—from behind the curtains of his bed. "Here is some poetry, Tom. It is the only thing which calms me in my frenzied moments. Byron was the same. Indeed, I sometimes think Byron and I are very much alike."

"Here, give us hold of them," said Tom, who had regained his good humour.

Sam looked at him for a moment, and then thrust the sheet of paper inside his shirt. "No," he said, "I'd rather not. You might be tempted to copy them, and pass 'em off as your own. They are the outpourings of a noble heart, and over this heart they shall repose, until Mrs. Vanderspek's girl has finished the boots, when she shall carry 'em round the corner."

"All right," Tom replied. "I wouldn't keep them there, though, if I were you. I've heard of paper collars; but hang me, if I'd like to wear a paper shirt. And now, hadn't you better put on your coat and waistcoat? We've seen your muscle, you know!"

"Certainly," said Sam. "And while I proceed to adorn my clothes, for I deny most emphatically that they adorn me"—an opinion of which Tom signified his approval by a "hear! hear!"—"perhaps you'd like some refreshment, old feller. Shall I send for some shrimps and beer? We can get 'em close by! No! Well, help yourself to tobacco. It may be strong, and perhaps open to an objection on the ground of being somewhat rank and unwholesome, but then it's cheap. You're sure you bear no malice, Tom?"

"Quite sure," Tom replied, with a smile.

"Then I'm happy—that is, as happy as a broken-hearted man can expect to be," Sam said. "I should have regretted thrashing you, old fellow. No, no, don't get up. It's all right. Brothers all, you know." And he proceeded to adorn his clothes.

CHAPTER XII.

When Sam had put the finishing touches to his oilet, arranged his coat so that that garment might ie open and show his vest, he carefully put on one ;love, and slapping his knee with the other, he urned to Tom, who was watching him with con-iiderable amusement, and said, "Now, old feller, I hink I shall do. I only wear one glove, you see— ι very good dodge too, especially when three-and-ixpence is an object. You can wear one until he's lone for, and then wear the other, so it's as good ,s two pairs."

"'Pon my word, Sam, you are really splendid!" Tom said. "You are a regular D'Orsay."

"Who is Dorsey?" Sam inquired, glancing at iimself in the glass. "A good-looking feller, I laresay. Now I shouldn't wonder but what you hink I take pride in this sort of thing! But I lon't; I feel an interest in nothing now. Victuals ιo longer charm me. Clothes have ceased to)lease. But that I do occasionally have a meal, ind always dress with remarkable taste, I do not leny. But it's all from a sense of duty, Tom; I)we it to the profession, and, if I may say so, to)ociety. So come along, old feller."

"Where do you purpose going," Tom asked.

"We'll stroll up Piccadilly and into the Park, if you like," Sam replied. "Lots of young ladies of the highest fashion, who are engaged in commercial pursuits up to seven o'clock, will be there presently, and we'll give 'em something to admire. You'll excuse my mentioning it, Tom, but your clothes are not up to the—ah—the knocker, if I may say so; evidently built by a provincial tailor. I would lend you one of my coats, only it might not fit. I've such a magnificent torso, you know," and he held his breath, threw his shoulders back, and stuck out his chest which would probably girth about a foot less than the young fellow's beside him.

"You can't expect everybody to be so well dressed as yourself, Sam. And as I shall remain in town but a few days, I must be content to play second fiddle to you," Tom said. "But now, while we are on personalities, you won't mind my saying that you look decidedly out of sorts. You never had much colour, old fellow, but I never saw you look so sallow as you do now. You've lost flesh too, and are decidedly rickety all over."

"True," Sam replied in a miserable tone. "I'm not the man I was. All my clothes are too big for me, except my gloves; the oftener I put *them* on, the smaller they seem to get. It's all through my unfortunate passion, Tom. If that girl only knew how I love her, have loved her—stop a minute, let's look in this shop window. There's a young lady, evidently of the upper ten, and doosid nice-looking, smiled on me as she passed. There, she's turned round." And he put himself into a most elegant

attitude, casting alternate glances along the pavement, and in at the shop-window, where he saw the reflection of his person. "There goes another stricken heart," he continued, linking his arm in Tom's, who was immensely amused. "She may never see me again, poor girl; she may go back to her father's halls in the neighbourhood of Hyde Park, and pine within her gilded cage. But no matter! I love that girl, Tom—not the one just gone by, but the other, you know who — so truly, so devotedly, so madly, that it drives me to do what, under happier circumstances, I should loathe. The quantities of champagne I've drunk at my own expense, and at that of others, I dare not think about. It always makes me ill; I'm sure they put vitriol in it, for it scorches my inwards. But what of that? one fire is scorching my heart, a fire never to be quenched; what's the difference, then, if another burns up my liver? No, Tom! whenever the thought of those potations taken to drown care obtrudes itself on my mind, I try to banish it. I dare not think of it, though I fear I shall have to soon, as I am in correspondence with the tavern-keeper's solicitor on the subject, all the letters of that correspondence, however, being written by him."

"You should strive against this despondency," Tom remarked ironically. "You really shouldn't give way to it. Try and take some interest in life, as other young fellows do."

"I can't," Sam replied, mournfully. "The die is cast. Nothing attracts me but *her*, and she won't. But no matter. That's a neat necktie in the

window, Tom!" he continued in a much livelier strain, as he pulled up in front of another shop. "Very neat, indeed. Three-and-sixpence; I think I'll have it." And he abstracted from his pocket a wash-leather bag, but, after considerable search, finding only eighteen-pence and a bad half-crown, he returned it to his pocket, with the remark that 'the thing was confoundedly loud in pattern, and he didn't like loud things."

"I don't think you go the right way to please her," Tom said.

"My dear feller, you don't know the female heart so well as I do," Sam replied. "I've done everything likely to gain her regard. I've spent no end of money in clothes. I've walked up and down Northumberland Street, on the opposite side to her house, in tight patent leather boots and with a cigar, until the tobacco made me feel unpleasant qualms in the stomach, and the boots gave me corns, to which at the present moment I'm a martyr. I've given way to habits which may be rather wild, but are esteemed gentlemanly—for women, you know, are said to be fond of a rake. I made free with a knocker in the neighbourhood of Islington, and had to pay for a new one, though I had the original in my pocket at the time, and had to apologize to the owner in open court. That knocker she spurned when I laid it at her feet. You have heard me say I've written volumes of poetry to her. I've done more—I actually serenaded her one night with a beautiful song—words and music by myself—until I was ordered to move on by the police, and on my refusing to submit to their arbitrary commands, was

taken to the lock-up, where I spent the remainder of the night. And though I've done all this, which was enough, and more than enough, to gain any ordinary woman's regard, she won't listen to me, and says I'm a fool."

"Then why not try some other way," said Tom. "If you have done all you say without making yourself agreeable to her, perhaps it's because she doesn't like it. Indeed, I should think it's very probable, when she said you were a fool, that she thought so. There's no accounting for the strange tastes of young women, you know, Sam."

"It's possible!" Sam replied, thoughtfully. "But I must say I look at it as rather improbable. She may be an exception to the general rule, I grant you. Generally speaking, if you've the name of being a devil of a fellow, there's quite a run on you with the girls, and if you've been a bit naughty, they adore you. I don't profess to explain how it is, but I'm sure it is so. If it were not, what the deuce should they imitate fast men for? The girls now, and innocent little beggars too, can smoke a mild cigar, and talk as slangy as anyone."

"But you're a devil of a fellow, you know, Sam, and yet your reputation doesn't seem to have pleased her. Indeed, she has called you a fool," Tom said. "Suppose you give up being a devil of a fellow! You may succeed better in a quieter character."

"I don't know! My inclinations, previous habits, and physique—though, mind you, I've a remarkably fine chest—all tend to a quiet life; and if I thought she would be better pleased, I would reform, for

dissipation is deuced hard work, Tom, I can tell you," Sam replied. "I didn't become a fast man because I liked it. Cigars at twopence apiece make me ill, and beyond a glass of good beer, my fancy never inclined towards drinking, so that you see I've gone through a good deal for her sake. But then I'm afraid her heart it is anoth— Hold hard, old feller! that's my ribs, you know, and your elbow is uncommonly bony."

"Then don't—" Tom began.

"I won't!" Sam interrupted in haste. "Don't mention it. And you're sure you're not in love with her, Tom! She's very beautiful, you know, and I might pardon you if you were."

"She is by far the best-looking girl, as she is the best in everything else, I know. But I'm not in love with her in the way you mean," Tom replied.

"I'm so glad," Sam said. "It's very comforting in any other misfortune to know a dozen or two of your friends are in the same mess; but when you're in love, you'd rather have it all to yourself. It doesn't improve your state of mind to know there are others in love with *her* too. In fact, it develops a homicidal tendency. I'm so glad. Let me shake hands again with you. Or never mind, I'll do it when we return home to-night. Put me in mind of it, old feller. I owe you a grip for them words."

"I hope you'll take my advice, and give over being a devil of a fellow. I really believe *she* would like you all the better. And if I were you, I would not refer to the state of your—what-do-you-call-

ems—your young affections any more. At least for some time," Tom said.

"Well, I'll think it over. But here we are in the Park. There don't seem to be many here, so it's no use wasting ourselves on such a deserted place," said Sam, sucking the handle of his umbrella. "I say, old feller," he continued, turning towards Tom, "you can't lend me two shillings, can you? I forgot my purse when I came out."

Tom laughed. "You forget you pulled out your bag a little while ago," he said. "It looked uncommonly empty too, old lad. You're rather short of money, aren't you?"

"There's no disguising anything from you," Sam replied, while a faint colour mounted to his face. "I *am* short. But no matter. I can dine on threepence very comfortably."

"No occasion to do that," Tom said, laughing, and slapping him on the shoulder. "My uncle said you were to have whatever money you wanted, and that it was his opinion it would be a shame if a genius should be hard pressed for the want of a few pounds."

"Did he?" asked Sam, brightening up wonderfully. "We'll drink his health presently. I like your uncle. He gave me a handsome pin, which I daresay you recollect."

"I recollect it now you mention it. But how is it, Sam, you, who are so splendid, haven't it on?" said Tom.

"I wore it this morning," Sam replied, now actually blushing. "I had it on my shirt-front when I went to call on *her* for a purpose I needn't

mention. But I think I shall not wear it again for some little time; in fact until I have my remittances from home. Mrs. Vanderspek's little account was due, and so I—I left it with a friend of mine."

"With a relative, I suppose," said Tom, smiling.

"Well, yes! with my uncle. It was only one pound fifteen, so I hope soon to reclaim it," Sam replied.

"We'll have it out to-morrow, old fellow. Then there's the tavern-keeper! How much is that?"

"About four pound!" Sam replied, sheepishly.

"Are there any others?" Tom inquired.

"Three pound ten at the tailor's?" replied Sam.

"Is that all?"

"Seven-and-six for a garnet ring!" Sam replied. "And that's everything, and I'm very much ashamed to have to make such a confession; I am, indeed, old feller. And nothing ever should have induced me to make it, hadn't we once shared the same bed and the same crust, and been remarkably fonder of each other than brothers."

"Never mind, Sam. Twenty pounds will pay everything, and set you going again. I'll let you have the money in the morning, and for to-night I'll be banker," Tom said.

"You're a trump, Tom, and so is your uncle," Sam assured him with great delight. "I accept your offer of assistance. I should be ungrateful if I didn't. But only as a temporary loan, old feller, and I'll give your uncle my I O U for the amount."

"All right," said Tom, who was greatly amused

at his friend's embarrassment. "You'll pay him back as soon as you've entered on your Liverpool engagement, and you'll send us orders for your benefit night. Now where are we to go?"

While they had been talking they had walked up the Strand until they were opposite the theatre of that name, in which a new burlesque was being performed every night to crowded houses.

"Here you are, Tom!" Sam said, after casting his eyes down the play-bill. Let's go in! I've got orders for the boxes in my pocket."

"All right," Tom replied. "Go on."

"It's all very well to say go on," Sam remarked, while endeavouring to elbow his way through the press that filled the lobby. "It's quite another thing to do, though. Now then! here you are!" he said to the official who took the tickets. "I've orders for two. Me and my friend."

"Excuse me, sir," the man replied, "there is a mistake. One diamond and pearl pin, one pound fifteen. This is not an order. It looks like a pawn-ticket. I'm afraid I can't allow you to pass on this authority." And the fellow wagged his head as he returned the duplicate to Sam and laughed. And the crowd behind them tittered, and one young gentleman in evening dress, with a pretty young girl on his arm, expressed his opinion in loud tones that they were a couple of counter-jumpers; but on Tom turning on him a face that looked exceedingly angry, and inquiring whether he referred to him and his friend, he sulkily replied that such was not his intention. Whereupon Tom said that perhaps some other gentleman did. But

everyone there in male attire denying the imputation, he took Sam by the collar of his coat, saying, "Come along, you donkey!" and paid for their tickets. The ridiculousness of the whole affair, however, striking him a minute or two after, he burst into a laugh which startled everyone in the lobby, making the young gentleman we have referred to jump in such a manner that Sam assured him "he needn't be afraid, he didn't intend hurting him."

Tom had not had much experience of theatres, and he was delighted with all he witnessed. The people in the pit amused him. He admired the handsome and well-dressed women in the stalls. He was charmed with Miss Swanborough, and laughed so heartily at and with Mr. George Belmore that the whole company, unused to so much freshness and genuine enjoyment, acted at him the whole of the evening. Indeed, his good looks, healthy brown face, and hearty laughter attracted many eyes to the box in which the lads were sitting, and more than one opera-glass was turned on the young fellow by fair hands, and more than one old habitué of the house felt his ennui leave him, and thought of what he would give if he could only feel like him.

Tom told Sam he had never enjoyed himself so much in his life. "It's first-rate," he said. "And how well she dances." This observation referred to Miss Swanborough.

"Doesn't she!" Sam replied. "And isn't she charming? She's very great at this sort of thing."

"A deuced handsome woman, too!" Tom remarked. "How old is she, Sam?"

"Oh, I say! that won't do, you know!" Sam eplied. "Ladies are *always* youthful on the stage. As long as they're in front of the footlights they're ever more than one-and-twenty. But I say, what's he row there, I wonder?"

The orchestra had ceased playing, and Miss Swanborough had ceased dancing. The people in he boxes were craning over to catch a glimpse of he front row, while those in the pit were looking up at the same place. While Tom was praising he performance, a short, stout man, with enormous bushy grey whiskers and black curly hair, dressed n evening costume, over which was sprinkled an unlimited quantity of jewellery, walked with uneven steps down to the front tier of the boxes, and leaning over, after staring solemnly round the house for a few moments, said in a hoarse, thick voice, "Very good! Very good indeed! You're a good 'un to hop, my dear, I'll be dashed if you're not."

This interruption of the performance caused many angry glances to be cast towards the boxes, and cries of "He's drunk! Turn him out!" were heard.

"Turn me out, you lubbers!" roared the gentleman referred to, glaring angrily round him. "You'd better try it. I'll rope's end every mother's son of you if you say another word." At length his eyes rested on the box in which Tom and Sam were standing, and bringing his heavy fist down with a bang, he continued, "What cheer, mate! I'll be shot if it ain't the cocky gentleman as I come up in the train with. Hullo, my hearty! Here am I, Captain Jack Waters, as knows

what he knows, as these lubbers are going to turn out. I've paid money, d'ye see, and here I stay as long as I like, d'ye see?"

"The fellow is drunk," said Sam. "Who was he speaking to? He looked this way, I think."

"I came part way to town in the train with him," Tom replied. "The fellow, I believe, is a most awful ruffian. But he'll get walked off now; there's a policeman going to him."

The policeman went up to the gallant British sailor and requested the favour of his company. But we all know Britons never, never will be slaves. The result of this invitation was a short skirmish, a great uproar, a stampede from the boxes, and when the captain and the guardian of the peace were again seen by the lads, the former was standing with his back to the pit, and held the back rail of one of the seats in his hand, calling on them to come on, while the latter was lying on his back considerably the worse for the encounter. Plenty of men were there, but the captain looked so formidable that none cared to attack him, until Tom made his way to the scene. Pushing those who crowded round on one side with his broad shoulders, the young fellow, standing half a head taller than any there, went up to Captain Jack, and looking him hard in the face, as he put his hand heavily on his shoulder, he said, "Now, Captain Waters, you had better leave the house, or you'll find yourself in trouble."

"Ha! my hearty, 'tis you, is it?" the captain replied. "I paid my money, d'ye see, and I mean to have my money's worth. So hands off, mate, or

I shall give you a taste of the rope's end, d'ye see?"

"I see this," said Tom, "that if you don't put that stick down and be off, I'll throw you over into the pit."

The gallant but inebriated captain stared at him stupidly for a moment, and then putting down the weapon with which he had armed himself, replied, "You're a cock of the game to ruffle your feathers at an old hen-master, but I admire pluck, d'ye see! And I'll treat you to anything and as much of it as you like, if you'll come along o' me. No, you won't! Then we part company. Mum's the word. You know what P stands for? Then don't forget!"

When Captain Jack left the theatre the performance was resumed; but the lads, fearing to be called on by the police to give what information they could of that gentleman, wisely followed, neither of them having any desire to make repeated visits to the police-office in the character of witnesses.

"That was an ill-looking ruffian, Tom. I was just going to pitch into him when you pushed before me. Gad! I'm glad I didn't though. I'm sure I should have half killed him," Sam said, when they were in the street, and the captain was some distance in front, sailing along and making short tacks towards the Haymarket. "I felt my muscle swelling tremendous. He would have caught it if I *had* pitched into him."

"Look! there he is in front," Tom replied. "I'll stop him, and let him know you'd like to have a round with him, Sam."

"No occasion," Sam said, linking his arm in Tom's and holding him tight. "'Twouldn't be right now. I should be the aggressor."

"All right, old fellow. I thought you were anxious, you know," Tom replied, laughing. "Where shall we go now? It's getting rather late, and I'm hungry. Can we get supper anywhere?"

"Lots of places. Dozens of shops all the way down the Strand. Or we can go to Gatti's if you like," Sam informed him.

"What sort of a place is Evans's?" Tom inquired. "I've heard my uncle say it used to be a famous place for suppers and singing."

"I was never there, so I can't say," Sam replied. "But we can go there if you like."

"I should like to very much," Tom said. And the lads walked away to those rooms which were so famous thirty years ago, and of which our fathers speak with pleasure, telling us of many a jovial blade, young student, grave divine, and famous statesman who used to congregate there, but whose feet are now turned upwards towards the sod.

The rooms were almost empty when the lads entered. Instead of being a scene full of life and boisterous gaiety, it appeared almost mournful. They ordered their kidneys and mashed potatoes, and listened to a dozen little boys, looking like choristers, singing glees. Then a gentleman in evening dress came on the platform, and sang, in a lugubrious manner, "The Arethusa."

"Solemn, isn't it?" Sam said, mournfully. "That fellow up there thinks he's singing a requiem for the room. Perhaps he's appealing to the

ghosts of those who used to sit here, and who made it the most famous as well as the pleasantest supper-room in London, and telling them that its glory has departed. I wonder what they would say if they could drop in now!"

"I think I can tell you, young gentlemen!" said a feeble voice near them.

Both lads turned round, and saw an old man, who, though upright and apparently hearty, must have reached an advanced age, sitting at one of the small tables near them.

"I happened to overhear your remark, sir," he said in a quavering voice. "I am an old man—I have lived, sir, nearly eighty years, and every night that I have been in London, for the last fifty years, I've taken supper in these rooms. I have seen all the wits of my time here. The place is unlike what it was. I can remember seeing in this room, and hearing them too, Charles Mathews, and Kean, Brougham, Lyndhurst, Palmerston, and a host of others. I've heard Braham sing his songs—songs, young gentlemen, as unlike those of the present day as the wit of that time is to that of this. In that corner I once heard the Ar-hb——p of C——b—y sing a comic song. That was in his college days, and very well he sang. Here—here——" But the old gentleman broke down with a fit of coughing, and the lads probably missed some entertaining stories.

"You have never been here before, I presume," the old gentleman said, when he had regained the little breath age and infirmity had left him.

"Never," Tom replied. "And—and I don't

think I shall ever come again. It's not a jovial place by any means."

"It is not. The only time it appears to have any animation is the night after the University boat race," the old gentleman said. "But then it is not like it was in the old time. There is noise without fun. But the men who made and kept Evans's famous are all dead, and their wit, their humour, and their songs are dead with them. I wish you good night, young gentleman."

"That old man must feel it terribly dull here, I should think!" Tom said, when the old gentleman had left the room. "One wouldn't imagine he had ever been a racketing fellow, would they? And yet I'll be bound he's cut his jokes, said his witty things, and sang his songs in this room with the best of them, and perhaps gone out and beat the watch afterwards. I felt dull enough before, but he has made me feel positively mournful. People may talk about the beauties of a good old age, but in my opinion the most pitiful object in the world is the man who has outlived his day. Now had he lived down in the country, he would very likely have been riding to hounds up to within the last half-dozen years, and even now trot along on a steady cob to see the meet, and would have been able to *talk* of what he had done for ever. And what is more, he would have had plenty to listen to him. Indeed, people who live in towns are very much to be pitied."

"Very much so," Sam replied, wagging his head, and scooping up the last of the mashed potatoes on his fork. "I'll go farther, and say everybody who

hasn't two thousand a year, and nothing to do but spend it, are to be commiserated, whether they live in town or country. I look on it, in fact, as a personal grievance."

"You're an old humbug!" Tom said with a blush. "You have what money cannot buy, and yet what will bring you money, and plenty of it. And that is genius. You are best off, Sam. My prospects may not be realised, but you are *always* safe. The British public are pretty good judges of what you have to sell, and never grudge the price."

"Kind of you to say so, old feller," Sam replied. "The public are not infallible though. Many a cleverer fellow than you or I has been neglected and left to starve by the public. Genius is all very fine, but real estate is better. Why, with a comfortable independence of a thousand or two a year—I'll be modest about it—I could live happily and enjoy myself uncommonly, though I lost all my genius. If genius were a marketable commodity and prices ruled high, I would advertise any I may have for sale at once. A fool, Tom, could live and die happily on two thousand a year. But I doubt very much if a genius would be very comfortable in a garret, especially if he were hungry, and had nothing but his genius to offer the butcher. Indeed, I think his neighbours would have a deuced unpleasant time of it, and that under such circumstances the fool would be the better companion. If I am a genius, I hope I shan't be like most of them. They are a deuced hard lot to live with."

"You don't mean that, I know," Tom said. "Haven't I heard you say, scores of times, you

would rather hear a full house come down with a hearty burst of applause when you stepped in front of the footlights, and see a thousand faces turned towards you, and a thousand pairs of eyes look approval, than you would come into a fortune?"

"Very likely you have, old feller," Sam replied. "I don't deny I may have uttered those sentiments. But I was very green then, and had only seen the stage from the front. I've been behind the curtain since then, and heard the manager curse the players, and seen the actors, whom I used to admire, snubbed and patronised by the swells. I have found out that the very funny man, who keeps the house in a roar of laughter, is often a poor broken-spirited, melancholy beggar, with very likely a wife and half-a-dozen children, and an execution in the house at home. That the man who does the youthful lover business has a jealous wife, most likely watching him from the side boxes, and if he does throw himself into his part, makes his appearance next morning with a few slips of court-plaster on his face. I have seen the fellow who on the stage gives away thousands, in the most unconcerned manner, beg with tears in his eyes, when off, for the loan of a sovereign. And then the envy and jealousy among them beats cockfighting. When *I* make my appearance in public, and have to fight a stage duel, I'll take good care to see the swords have buttons on 'em, or I should always be afraid of being run through in earnest. It's all very fine, Tom, and pretty to look at from the front, when the gas is lighted, and the house full, but it looks somewhat different in the morning, when the daylight is

struggling through the windows, and the floors are strewn with dust and orange peel, and the under-strappers are there in their working clothes. The illusion disappears then, and the enchanted palace is only a coal-hole after all. The velvet hangings are faded, the gilded cornices tarnished, and huge cobwebs are hanging from the chandeliers. And the disillusion is just as complete with the actors as with the house. The fairies whom you saw last night sitting on the petals of flowers, or balancing themselves on the top of a champagne bottle, are as ordinary a lot of young women as you'd meet with between here and Clapham. The sweet creature, who appeared so young and blooming and fresh that you almost fell in love with her, is old enough to be your mamma, and has coarse red cheeks, a large family of grown-up children, and a highly developed taste for porter and shrimps. The——"

"Stop, for heaven's sake!" Tom said, laughing. "You are most unmerciful in undraping the figures we have so long worshipped. I shall never again see another actress, but I shall fancy her an old frump with false colour, false calves, false bust, and false everything but impudence. You are too stern a moralist, Sam, and if you preach like this to everyone, you will ruin the profession you should adorn. I can't think all the pretty women we see on the stage are old and ugly and painted and padded."

"There are some who are not," Sam replied, "I didn't say there weren't. We know one who *will* be on the stage, who is the best-looking woman in London. And as good as she looks. Here's her health."

Tom took up the pewter, and nodded across the table at his friend.

"That's good porter," Sam said, wiping his mouth with the back of his hand. "Well, when *she* comes on, it will be a different thing. I've said before, and I'll say again, I would only wish to act with her in 'Romeo and Juliet,' and see the whole house rise as one man and give us one burst of applause, and then I would willingly die. That would be a moment worth bartering a lifetime for. But then it can't be and won't be, and it doesn't alter the truth of what I've been saying. And you may talk as much as you like about genius, but she's only a hack horse after all, and must trot when she is bid, and be whipped and spurred when she's lazy, or sick, or tired, just like the commonest butcher's nag in town, or the chances are she'll get no corn. No! genius is all very well when you haven't to ride her head off for a living, but a comfortable independence is better. Real estate, Tom, is the thing to swear by. Give me two thousand a year, and I won't call King George my uncle. Waiter, what's to pay?" And he pulled out his wash-leather bag, but remembering the state of his finances, he waved his hand towards that functionary, and said, "I've left my purse on the piano. But no matter. My friend will pay. And now it's time to be off, for I'm going to turn over a new leaf."

And the two lads left and went to their lodgings, while the everlasting stream of humanity surged past them and onwards to—well, we can give a pretty good guess where many of them were going, but should not like to be put on our solemn oath.

CHAPTER XIII.

In the last chapter we stated Sam's determination to turn over a new leaf. Having failed to please Marion by his attempts at being a deuce of a fellow, he would give up smoking himself ill with cheap cigars, and confine himself steadily to beer or porter in the way of beverages. He even gave over sending her his poetic effusions, an instance of self-denial that cost him a great struggle. "I can no more help writing poetry than the birds can help singing," he informed Tom. "*I* can't help it if I am a poet, can I? Byron couldn't help it. None of us can. I must write; but I give you my word of honour I won't send them to her. If she sees them at all, it will be in the pages of the *Gentleman's Magazine*." As these productions never found their way into any of the periodicals of the day, it is surmised that the editors of those journals to whom Sam sent them either failed altogether to see their merit, or else suppressed them, as their author subsequently hinted, through envy. Marion, however, received no more of them, and the paper for spills had to be obtained from some other source.

The first thing done, after the new leaf had been turned over, was the redemption of Sam's jewellery

from the hands of the Israelites; the settlement of his little misunderstanding with the tavern keeper; and the clearance of the other small debts which he owed. When these were all paid, Sam had about nine pounds left out of the twenty advanced to him by Tom, and with this sum, he informed his friend, he could go on delightfully until his rents were due from home.

"'Pon my word, Tom," he said, as he dropped the change left out of the twenty pounds into his wash-leather bag, "Your uncle is a very nice man. I'm very fond of him. We'll drink his health presently. May he never want a friend, nor a twenty pound note to lend him. That reminds me, old fellow, that business is business. I'll write you an I O U."

"No occasion for that, Sam!" the other gentleman replied. "We'll take your word for it, old fellow, that you'll pay when it's convenient, and not before."

"That's very kind of you, Tom!" Sam said, as he wiped his pen in his hair. "I must give you an acknowledgment for the assistance though. It may be for years or it might be for ever, you know."

"Just so! it doesn't matter how many years it stands, or whether you pay at all!" Tom replied.

"I know that," Sam said. "But you shall have the I O U, nevertheless. There it is. It's not on regular stamped paper; but that doesn't matter. I'll put a postage stamp on it. I shall feel it quite as binding as if I had spent sixpence in a bill-stamp, to say nothing of the economy of saving fivepence. Put that in your pocket, old fellow;

and tell your uncle that he's made a friend of me for life, and I'll stand by him like a man. I'm not above standing by a fellow who has two thousand a year. He may count on me."

During the few days Tom remained in town it must be confessed he made most of his time. The lads went to the theatre with Marion every night, and to all the places of amusement open during the day. They saw the Coaching Club meet at Hatchett's, and from there they went to the Row, where Tom remarked that the ladies rode beautifully, and their male companions uncommonly badly. They stood on the pavement opposite Marlborough House two hours and a quarter watching a pair-horse brougham, with the expectation of seeing the Prince of Wales get into it, and were not a little disappointed to see it drive off with a doctor who had been visiting a patient on the other side of the way. Their loyalty was gratified, however, the next day, when they saw the Prince and Princess driving in the park. This was the first time Tom had seen royalty; and so, when the carriage was passing by the iron railings over which the two lads and Marion were leaning, he took of his hat and cheered, to the great amusement of those who were standing near him. His Royal Highness spoke to the Princess, and both turned to where the young fellow's brown face appeared above his neighbours, and both of the Royal personages laughed and bowed. There were some other young fellows who laughed too, and pressed very near the lads, casting admiring eyes at the beautiful girl with them, and speaking a little too loudly of "the country fellow;" until Captain

Wellford, of the Blues, informed them "that he saw the countryman the day before put on the gloves with the Surrey Slasher, and that he was a doosid hard hitter, and as neat a sparrer as he had seen for a long time, and that the Slasher was of opinion it was a matter for regret he was not in the ring." Tom took Sam to the public where the Slasher instructed aspiring youth in the noble art, the latter looking on while Tom and the professor had a bout with the gloves. The Slasher endeavoured to persuade Sam to have a turn with him; that young gentleman, however, declining with thanks, on the ground of the other being fatigued with his encounter with Tom, and that it would be unfair. He did, however, strip to show his muscle, which the Slasher, with his tongue in his cheek, pronounced, to Sam's great delight, enormous.

After finishing up with a trip to Richmond, and a sumptuous dinner to which Sam invited him and Marion, and which they greatly enjoyed, Tom, however, having to pay the bill, the lad packed his portmanteau, took leave of his friends, and taking the early train from London, reached The Moat in the afternoon of the same day. Mr. Seedly was delighted to see him back again. The little man was dull without him, for the lad, independent of the link which bound them together, had twined himself round his heart. While he was away, the time had passed very heavily at The Moat. Before Tom had been adopted by Mr. Seedly, the latter gentleman had usually found the days pass quickly enough. There were the stables to inspect, the terriers to take for a run, and his letters to read and

answer. In the season he hunted usually five days a fortnight, and when hunting was over, there was fishing just coming in. Then the evenings passed pleasantly with his particular claret and the daily paper, and an occasional rubber of whist with any friends who might look him up. But all this was changed. He had become accustomed to the society of the lad, and felt that something was out of joint when he was away. I'm afraid during those few days Mrs. Bickley had an unthankful time of it. The little man complained of his breakfasts, would hardly look at his lunch, and declared his dinners were spoiled, and that nothing was hot but the wine, and everything made a hash of but the mutton. That lady thanked goodness when Tom returned, and expressed a hope to John, the groom, that now he had come back the master wouldn't be so contrary and awkward, and that as to his dinners having been spoiled, that was all nonsense; he only wanted some liver pills; and the wine had been as cool as ice could make it, for she had made a practice of regularly tasting it herself, so as to be sure.

The evening Tom came home, Mrs. Bickley excelled herself in preparing a dinner for them. It was a feast, and for the first time for a week the little man was contented. He helped the lad to all the dishes, and would insist on his taking more than was good for him. The particular bin in the cellar was opened, an occurrence that took place not more than twice during the year, and a couple of bottles of *the* port brought up in his own hands, with the cobwebs of twenty years still on them. He cracked his jokes—old jokes, it must be confessed,

and some of which Tom had listened to and laughed at, as an amiable young fellow should do, a dozen times, at least before—told funny stories, and asked him about places of amusement, supper rooms, and public characters he had known in London in his day, but which had all departed to that limbo from which there is no return. But if the king was dead, another reigned in his stead. If the haunts of the young fellows of his day were known no more, others were in fashion. If Mathews and Kean and the great lights of thirty years ago were gone out, were there not Sullivan, Fechter, Irving, Taylor, Brough, Toole, and other stars? If the world knew Grisi, Lablache, Braham, and Taglioni no more, were they not enchanted by Titiens, Patti, Nilsson and a host of others? And last, though not least, was not Mr. Alfred Cellier, the composer of "The Sultan of Mocha," growing up into a strong, handsome lad, down at Chelsea? And if Tom could not talk of half a century ago, sure he could tell him of the present! When the cloth was removed, the little man poured out a glass of wine with his own hands for his housekeeper, and praised her cooking.

"It was time to have the young one back again, Mrs. Bickley!" he said. "Things were all going sixes and sevens. But now you will charm us with your dinners, and the wine will regain its flavour."

Mrs. Bickley was glad to see Mr. Tom home again. She hoped he had enjoyed hisself, "which is more than anybody has been able to do here while he was away," she added as she left the room.

"And now, Tom," said the little man when they were alone, "fill your glass. You can smoke if you

like, but it spoils your taste for the wine. I like a pipe when I take my nightcap, but you haven't yet acquired a taste for spirits. But light up, my boy, if you like, and tell me how you found our young friend Maggs."

Tom told him all about Sam, and the means he took to make himself agreeable to Marion. He described the manner in which he had poured forth his wrongs, and stated his determination to have a round with him. He dwelt lightly on Sam's pecuniary embarrassments, and the means he had taken to raise a temporary loan. This part of his story, however, appeared to amuse Mr. Seedly more than any other. He lay back in his chair and laughed until the tears ran down his ruddy cheeks.

"Sam's misfortunes appear to amuse you, uncle!" Tom said, laughing himself at the time.

"Indeed, they do," the little man replied. "When you were relating the manner in which he referred to his having pledged the pin I gave him, and the subsequent misunderstanding with the door-keeper at the theatre, memory was very busy with me. It carried me back to the days when I suffered from chronic impecuniosity, and I remembered my first visit to the Israelites. The way I walked up and down the street in which the three balls shone so resplendent in gilt, and crossed over, and stared in at the window as though I wanted to purchase some articles of jewellery instead of part with them, my dread of being recognised, and the certainty I felt that everybody was watching me and saying, 'There's young Silas going to pop his watch'—all this flashed on me, and I saw myself a young fellow once more

slipping quietly in through the side door in fear and trembling, and depositing my silver watch for fifteen shillings. I remember, too, I never redeemed it, Tom, and, by Gad, some day when you happen to go up Shudehill, you may, perhaps, see it in a certain shop window, for I'm certain no one has been fool enough to buy it. I sometimes feel proud of having got that fifteen shillings, and I flatter myself I plundered the enemy."

"Then you have known what it is to be hard up?" Tom said.

"I should think I have," the little man replied with a laugh. "I never made a hundred and fifty a year until I was thirty, and on that I kept a broken-down screw and hunted a day a week. I hope you got the pin out of pawn, Tom?"

"We managed that the day after I arrived in town," Tom said. "His debts amounted to but twelve pounds, and I left him with nine pounds in his pocket. He insisted on giving me an I O U for the amount, with a postage-stamp on the paper, and he declares you may count on him if ever you should want a friend. And he will send us orders for his benefit night when he gets one."

"I'm afraid this paper would not hold good in a court of law," the little man laughed, as he held up Sam's I O U. "I don't think they would admit it as a proof of debt. Suppose you light the candles with it! I'll give you the money presently."

"I'm not in want of any at present," Tom replied, as he consigned the paper to the flames. "I've nearly twenty pounds left. When I'm reduced to Sam's position, I'll let you know, uncle."

"Mind you do, Tom. It's economy for a young fellow to have ready money by him, for then he's never tempted to run into debt. If ever you want anything, let me know, and we'll find the money somehow. If you once get into the way of getting things without paying for them, it's astonishing what a lot you'll discover you want. The very ease with which you can have your wants supplied makes them a necessity. Though credit is the life-blood of business, it's the very plague when inoculated in your private affairs. I wouldn't have you get a thing on credit for any money. And whatever you do, never put your name to a bill. Stamped paper — not the sort our young friend Maggs puts his signature to—is the very deuce. You never know when you've done with it, and it's my opinion fellows pay for such assistance a hundred per cent, and if they renew, the Lord only knows how much more. Tradesmen are always willing enough to let a young fellow whose prospects are good run up long accounts with them, and I believe would rather he went on tick than not. But some day, and perhaps when you least expect it, they present their little bills, and you find that your sowing your wild oats has produced an enormous crop of tares. When you pay for everything as you get it, you always know how you stand, but I'll be shot if you ever can tell, if you once give way to the habit of going into debt. I've known many a pretty fellow spoiled by it. You get pretty deep into your tradesmen's books, and then, instead of retrenching, you go on to keep up appearances and keep your credit good, always hoping that something

will turn up—which never does, by the way—to put you straight, until at last you're afraid to look your affairs in the face. I daresay you think I speak feelingly; and I do. What I'm saying isn't the result of mere speculation, but of experience. I recollect when I was a young fellow I overran the constable, and a horrible time I had of it for about two years. I found it remarkably easy to raise a fine crop of debts about me, but when the day of settlement came, and I couldn't make fifty pounds do duty for a hundred, I found the reverse side of the medal was an ugly one. I bitterly repented having been so easy, Tom, and the worst of it was, I had literally nothing to show for the money. Where it went the deuce only knows. I wasn't an expensive fellow, and I thought I was always careful. But it did go, and I was in a mess. My creditors got more than Shylock demanded. He only wanted a pound of flesh, while they got off me just three stone in as many months. I sunk from twelve stone to nine. I didn't much care about *that*. 'Twas the breakfast hour that used to do for me—the time you get your letters. How I used to hate the sight of them! They have often made me sick, and I've gone to the office fasting, not having been able to look my breakfast in the face. The postman I regarded as a personal enemy. I never saw that worthy fellow but I half made up my mind to do for him. It's wonderful what cowards it makes of us too. Perhaps you wouldn't think it to look at me, for I *am* tubby and perhaps touched in the wind a bit, yet I remember the time when I was regarded a good bit above the average with the gloves, and I've had a forty minutes'

bout with the champion of the middle weights. Yet for all that, Tom, I've actually run away from a little pale-faced rickety devil whom I could have doubled up in half a minute, and run deuced hard too. I owed him an account I couldn't pay, and that made him more terrible in my eyes than if he had beat Bendigo. I told him so after I had paid him, and the little whelp laughed, and wanted me to run up another bill, assuring me he knew I was always on the square, and I had to threaten to thrash him with his own yard measure. I've often heard tradesmen abused for wanting their money, as though the honour of supplying their customers' wants and extravagances were sufficient. We should rather curse our own folly, Tom, for tradesmen can't pay if they are not paid, and if they do press you to have things you don't require, sure it's their trade. I found them on the whole deuced good fellows, and they gave me a long day; but I used to double, and turn, and twist, if I saw one of them in the distance, like a hunted hare. But thank God, my boy, by eating on one side of my mouth and wearing all my old clothes, I did get straight in time, and I would not have you go through what I did for anything. It was purgatory, and had I not been as hard as nails I believe I should have fretted myself to death. I hope you'll profit by my experience, Tom."

"I'll try," Tom replied. "I don't think I shall get into debt. Through your goodness to me, I am placed above the reach of any such temptation."

"So you are, Tom," said the little man, nodding at the young fellow across the table. "I'm pretty well off, thank God, and made a nice little heap of money

in cotton—quite enough to supply all my wants and a bit over. I don't say but that had I known I should meet with the son of your dear mother, I wouldn't have stuck to it a little longer. I think I should have done. When there is some one we're fond of coming after us, we're apt to go on grubbing for the sake of making him or her somebody, you know, and I think I should have liked to have got enough to make you a county man, and perhaps see you in Parliament. But a couple of thousands a year aren't bad for a single man, and I thought I had enough, and would give up business and enjoy myself while I was capable of enjoyment. But it's never too late to mend, Tom, my boy, and I'll make our two thousand a year into five, if I live, yet. And in property too. Five thousand a year in land is worth ten in anything else. A man with ten thousand a year from securities can be snubbed and looked on as nobody. But let me see them try that game on with one who has half that income from landed property. They couldn't do it! they daren't. They would be upsetting their most cherished institutions. I'll defy 'em, Tom. And you shall take your place in the county yet, and sit at Quarter Sessions, and perhaps be High Sheriff, for you *are* a gentleman by birth, and I'll make you as good as any of them in pocket."

Tom laughed. "You are ambitious, uncle!" he said. "You forget that with county people family stands for something, and trade is tabooed."

"Family and trade be d—hanged," the little man replied, snapping his fingers. "That may go down with some, but not with me. Why, my dear fellow,

besides the Howards there are not a dozen old families in the Peerage. They are all new people, every man jack of them, and nearly every penny of their wealth has been made in business. Why, merely as one instance, the estates of one of the, if not the largest landowner in Yorkshire, who is a peer of the realm, were acquired by his ancestor, a silversmith in Fleet Street, a hundred and fifty years ago, and some of the money they were purchased with don't seem to have been very creditably earned either, if Macaulay's History is to be believed. No, Tom, if you've got land, you've got position, and we'll have a comfortable estate yet. You mark my words."

"You are not going into business again, sir, are you?" Tom inquired.

"Not exactly that," the little man replied. "And yet I think I am. The fact is, Tom, a man needn't set up on his own account nowadays to make money. It is done far better by a combination of men of capital. They can put more money into it, undertake larger enterprises, and work at a less cost than ordinary firms. Besides that, if a man wishes to take his money out he can do so easily and at once, which is a great recommendation. Joint-stock companies are what I refer to, and I've placed every penny I'm worth, except the value of the place here, in one that has purchased one of the first banking concerns in London. I've gone into it carefully, and the resources of the company are enormous. They *must* make large profits, and I've no doubt will pay from ten to fifteen per cent. on their paid-up capital. All the safe men in town have gone in for it, and you'll see, my boy, we'll treble our capital in a few

years, and then realise, and buy an estate. It's all plain sailing, and I have the shares allotted me."

"Suppose it should fail?" Tom said.

"It can't. It's all nonsense talking of a concern like that failing. The capital is a million, and a quarter of it is paid on allotment of the shares, and another quarter at the end of three months," the little man replied. "They will have half a million to commence on, and with a capital of that amount they can undertake anything. The shares are already going up in the market, and no wonder. As I said before, the safest and cleverest financiers in the country are in for it, and if I had twice as much as I have I would put every penny in."

"I hope it will turn out as well as you expect, uncle," Tom said. "I know nothing of these affairs, and I'm afraid if I went in for anything of the kind, I should make a mess of it. Though if my opinion were asked, I should say, rest and be thankful. You have your hunting, and fishing, and dinners like those Mrs. Bickley sends up, and altogether a comfortable time of it."

"I know that," the little man replied, looking fondly at the young fellow. "But I tell you, I've got to be ambitious. Not for myself, Tom, but for you. I'd like to see you a county man before I die, and perhaps married to some nice girl. I think I could turn my face to the wall then, if I saw you were happy and prosperous, and when I meet my dear on the other side of the river, I could tell her I've done my best for her boy."

"Your goodness to me, sir, is more than I can ever thank you for," the lad said, returning the

little man's look with his eyes full of tears. "If anything should—should happen, I should never cease to reproach myself for being the cause of misfortune to you."

"Never fear, Tom! it's all right," the little man replied, gaily. "I shall wait until the shares are as high in the market as they are likely to go, and then realise. So I'll just have a glass of whisky and water and one pipe, and then we'll go to bed."

In the meantime, if anyone had taken the trouble to watch Miss Revell, they would have seen that a change had taken place in that young lady's deportment. She no longer took novels to church with her, or if she did they were enclosed in the covers of a church service, and on every occasion she behaved with great devoutness. She wore immense crosses round her neck, and propounded theological questions to the curate, which rather puzzled that young divine. She even on one occasion made her appearance at the Sunday School, but refrained from renewing her visit or placing her name on the permanent staff, owing to a disagreement with one of her scholars, who informed her during the lessons that "her young man as she was courtin' was peeping in at the door." That unfortunate lad's ears tingled for a month after. It is needless to say that when Tom found that Constance had no intention of becoming a Sunday-school teacher, he ceased turning up accidentally in the immediate vicinity of the school-room when the children were going home in the afternoons. Indeed, as a faithful chronicler, we must state that he spent those hours which intervened between morning service and

dinner, lying on the sofa, with a pipe in his mouth, reading the *Field*. This, no doubt, was very wrong. He perhaps might have been better employed in perusing Young's "Night Thoughts," or a volume of Dr. Prosy's sermons. I know he was very severely blamed for it, especially after it became known he was *épris* of Miss Revell. Several devout persons, to whom a newspaper—the *Young Englishwoman* and the *Times* excepted—on a Sunday afternoon, especially a paper devoted to sport, was nothing more or less than a trap laid by the enemy of mankind, declared it was shocking, and Tom was heartily abused by these purists over their Sunday afternoon tea, as well as most others of their friends and neighbours not there present. But I believe he was not much the worse for it. I have even heard some persons go so far as to say that not only for Sunday reading, but for every day in the week, they would rather their children read the *Field* than some of our daily and weekly papers not devoted to sport, but in which reports of the proceedings in the divorce court, and scandals of the class of the Beecher-Tilton scandal, appear. Tastes differ, I've no doubt, and these reports show the highly religious how wicked their neighbours are, and what evils to avoid. I'm not going to defend Tom, but at the same time, I will not blame him. I would rather point to the challenge given by the Great Master, who said to the Pharisees, "Let him that is without sin among you cast the first stone."

These Sunday afternoons were sometimes devoted to literary pursuits. But these occasions only took place when Mr. Seedly sat in his arm-chair with his

silk pocket-handkerchief over his face, indulging in an afternoon's nap. Then Tom covered many sheets of paper with attempts at versification. In these attempts he compared *her* to a swan, and in the next line but one he would declare it was a fawn she resembled. This was probably for the sake of the rhyme. He had seen a specimen of Sam's poetry, and thought it weak trash, and the writer a young ass. His opinion of his own was different. He read his verses over several times before sending them anonymously to the object who inspired them —always, however, signing his initials to them, so that it was perfectiy well known at The Cottage who the poet was—and he thought them remarkably clever. Sam thought the same of his, and from this the present writer has come to the conclusion that a very old saying, that "nothing is so easy as self-deception," is perfectly correct. When Tom was in London, he purchased the most expensive album he could find, and embellished its pages with the praises of a certain young lady, to whom he afterwards sent it. This book, containing the result of many hours' hard work, was in Mrs. Revell's hand the day Tom returned home. Her glasses were balanced on her nose, and she read in a doubtful voice :—

> "She walks in beauty like the night
> Of cloudless climes and starry skies."

"Humph!" she said, looking up and addressing her daughter. "This won't do; he doesn't expect us to believe he made this himself, I hope! I've met this before, in—I think—Solomon's songs."

"Indeed, it's nothing of the sort," Constance replied. "He has taken it from Byron or Shakespeare, I don't know which, and it doesn't matter. All the men steal what they write in albums—that is, if it's worth reading—and they expect you to believe it's original. You needn't believe it unless you like, you know; but you must let them think you believe it."

"I daresay you're right," mamma says. "For my part I don't think much of poetry. It may mean such a lot, or it may mean nothing at all. There's nothing you can take hold of in it, and it would take a cleverer woman than you or I to make any of this stuff look like a proposal, and pin a man to it. I like a good plain letter, and the more raving in it the better. They can't get out of *that*. Well, here's some more," she continued, turning over a leaf; "let's see what this is like. Now this is something to the purpose. If ever I read a proposal in my life, this is one, Why, Constance, 'twould stand good in any court of law, and to it he shall stand; I'll see to that. No one shall trifle with the heart of anyone belonging to me, and not have to pay for it. This isn't a copy of somebody else's nonsense; it's original enough. Quite sufficiently so for your purpose, my dear. Just listen!"

"I've read it already, mamma!" Constance replied, while something like a blush rose to her cheek. "And as to nonsense, I don't think it is. In my opinion the verses are not at all bad. Indeed, I've read worse in print."

"That's no criterion at all, my dear. I've heard a very good judge of such matters—a literary man

too—say that the quantity of rubbish that gets into print every season is awful to contemplate," mamma said. "Besides, I don't think our young friend's stuff—well, poetry, if you like, Constance, so don't fly into a rage about it—I don't think it will suffer by *my* reading it. I used to be considered an uncommonly fine reader."

"How you must have altered then, mamma," Constance remarks. Though she laughed at Tom's effusion herself, she didn't care about anyone else laughing at him. The feeling of proprietorship counts for something; and even if you don't care much about the dog that follows you, and licks your hand, and carries your bag for you, you don't like to see your friends kick him.

"I daresay I have altered," mamma replies. "You seem to be altering too, my dear. The affection, perhaps, isn't all on his side, after all. I begin to fancy there may be a sort of maternal love. But never mind! it can't do you any harm to hear it again, so listen." And she reads, in a rather husky voice, for she had slightly damaged the organ for elocutionary purposes in a dispute with the cook that morning, the result of six hours' intense labour on Tom's part, and which he had inscribed, in very large capitals—

"TO CONSTANCE.

"I love thee! ask my beating heart;
It says 'tis death from thee to part,
Were it for ever!
My vows are registered above;
Shall I, then, ever cease to love?
No, never! never!

"Oh, sweet! what endless pleasure lies
In thy dear lips, and in thine eyes,
Like boundless ocean!
To gaze, and lose myself in thee,
Be billow-tossed as in a sea
Of love's emotion,—

"'Twere happiness too great,—to link
My hand in thine—to die, to sink—
Unless thou give
Thy heart for mine—a poor exchange—
And raise me to Hope's loftiest range,
And bid me live.

"Oh, love! nor frown on me, nor start,
Take thou mine hand, for like mine heart
'Tis thine! 'tis thine!
Come! fall, sweet love, into mine arms—
They'll shield thee from the world's alarms—
And say thou'rt mine."

"Now, Constance, I'll not ask you whether they do or do not appear better for my reading them. I have my own opinion of that—an opinion shared in by many of the nobility, including the Baroness," mamma says, when she had finished reading Tom's original verses. "But I will ask you what you intend doing?"

"I suppose I can't do better than keep them," Constance replies.

"I think you can," mamma says, bringing her spectacles to bear on her daughter. "You must learn them, so that when he comes, you will be able to introduce a few lines in your conversation. It will flatter him, and you know what I've have told you before about getting the men to think well of themselves. He'll think higher of you than he

ever has done. You must declare they are beautiful, and he'll swear you have more taste and discernment than any other woman. And then you must send him some of yours."

"Good heavens, mamma! have you taken leave of your senses?" Constance exclaims, almost springing from her chair. "*I* make verses? I never wrote a line in my life. It is quite bad enough to have to read them when somebody else has made them."

"I suppose you can copy them as well as other people, and *say* they are yours," mamma says, quietly.

"What would be the use?" Constance replies. "He would be sure to recognise them."

"Not at all. Copy some out of an old magazine. Nobody ever reads magazine poetry, and it will be quite new to him," mamma informs Constance. "Indeed, I could turn out a few verses myself, only I'm rather out of practice. My poems, composed a few years ago when I was a child, have been highly spoken of by the *highest* authorities. Just sit down and write him a note, saying how charmed you are with his beautiful poetry, and I'll look up an old magazine for you. And if you could hint you had cried over them, and all that sort of thing, I think it would, perhaps, increase the effect."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE next morning Tom was supremely happy. There was a letter from Constance for him, in a long narrow envelope, highly scented. There was not much in it, but it took him a long time to read. Indeed, one perusal was not sufficient. He read it at least a dozen times. It also contained a copy of verses which he thought he had seen before. But as she had mentioned in her note that they represented the faint efforts of her feeble pen, he finally made up his mind they must be original, and that nothing he had seen before was so clever. The note was as follows:—

"MY DEAR MR. SEEDLY,—I received the *very* kind present you sent me, and I shall always, always value it. The beautiful poetry you wrote in it charmed me. I was so affected by it that I have *cried* over it for hours together. I never read anything so beautiful, and I did not know that we were honoured with the friendship of so *great* a *poet*. I, too, scribble sometimes. But then I am not gifted with the divine—I forget the word now, but you know what I mean—like you. My verses are very humble, but they are the feeble efforts of my *own* pen.

What an age it is since we have seen you at The Cottage! Is it a year, or a hundred years?

"Always etc., etc.,

"CONSTANCE.

"P.S.—I am going to see old Goody Brown to-morrow morning. I wonder whether you will be fishing."

A little forget-me-not was pressed flat between the folds of the note. Constance had taken it from the vase in the drawing-room where it had steeped in water for a week. Indeed, Tom himself had plucked it and given it her before he went to London. It was stale enough now, and the odour it emitted was not pleasant. He kissed it, however, and carefully put it away in his pocket-book. He was not learned in the language of flowers. But then, was it not typical of the sweet girl who sent it? Did it not remind him of her purity, her innocence, her freshness, her charms? He thought so. Calmly and dispassionately we think so, too. They were both stale and washed out. But he thought them both pure and fresh.

Tom had not thought of going fishing when he had got up that morning. In the first place, the weather was too bright and the water too fine to fish with any chance of success before the evening. And then he had arranged to ride over to the lodge to see a young horse Mr. Colburn had for sale. But Constance was going to pay one of her visits to Goody Brown, whose cottage was near the trout stream. So Tom after breakfast took his rod, and fastened a cast of flies round his hat, with the

intention of hooking some of those unfortunate trout, or perhaps of being hooked himself.

"I don't think you will do any good, Tom," Mr. Seedly said. "The sun is too bright, and the fish won't be on the feed until evening."

"I think I'll try," Tom replied. "It's such a time since I've been on the water that I quite long to wet a line. Can't you come with me?" the young hypocrite inquires.

"Well, I don't know," Mr. Seedly said, musing, "I have some letters to answer, but——"

"Don't let me interfere with any of your arrangements, uncle. I should be sorry to do that, and it would be a pity to drag you out in this hot weather, if we should have no sport," Tom said in haste. "So I'll light my pipe and be off."

He put his rod together when he came to the stream, but did not begin to fish. He thought it would be useless to flog the water until he saw the trout rising. He would walk down the stream until he came to Goody Brown's cottage, and begin there. When he got to this particular part of the river, he sat down on a willow stump and smoked his pipe, paying more attention to the pathway across the fields than to the water which ran close to his feet. The pipe was smoked and refilled more than once, and he was becoming tired. He had started from home almost directly after breakfast, and made no allowance for the time taken up by a lady's morning duties. He thought if he was not there tolerably early he would miss seeing *her*, never dreaming that there was Goody Brown to read to in case she had been first on the spot, and forgetting that half a mile

farther on was The Cottage, where he was always welcome. At the time he had left home Constance was yawning in bed over an old novel, and it would take that young lady two hours to get ready for the campaign, and put on her war-paint. At length, however, when he had almost come to the conclusion to return home, he saw a flutter of muslin over the next fence, and immediately commenced to fish with great earnestness. He never once turned his head towards the stile leading into the meadow where he was at work. Constance objected to stiles for the same reason she disliked short walking dresses. When walking with the lad, she had always declined his aid in getting over any obstructions in their path, insisting on his turning his back to her, and continuing to walk on. "What charming modesty!" the lad had thought. "How different from some girls, who, in the most ridiculously short garments, will stand on the top bar of a stile and jump into your arms." Happy ignorance! He didn't know the true reason of her bashfulness. *He* didn't know that Constance was, to say the least, rather full in the ankles, or that her foot was not small. So, instead of rushing away to help her over the stile, as most enamoured youths would have done, he got his flies up the branches of a tree, and consoled himself for the loss of his stretcher by assuring himself she was the most timid and modest girl in the world.

While he was pulling at his line in the hope of clearing it, Constance tripped across the grass to him. "Who would have thought of seeing you here?" she said, in a manner that intimated her surprise and astonishment were great.

It was then Tom broke his line. He gave it a harder pull than was necessary, and turned round towards the speaker with a blush on his face. "I'm so glad to see you," he said. "I've been waiting here ever since ten o'clock, and it's twelve now."

"What have you been waiting for?" she inquires, innocently. "Won't the fish sport, or were you expecting some one?"

"You know whom I was expecting," he replies, "and for whom I would sit waiting the whole day."

"Indeed, I declare I don't!" Constance said. "I can't imagine, unless it is Polly, Mrs. Brown's granddaughter."

"Don't you know you said in your note you should be coming here?" Tom asks. "I—I'm so much obliged to you for that note. You write a beautiful hand, and the verses were delightful."

"Oh! now I know you are laughing at me," she replies. "We know who the poet is, and it isn't me. My verses may be all very well for a woman, but yours—oh, I can't tell you what I think of them!" And she placed her hand lightly on his arm for a moment—a touch that made him tremble in every limb. And she looked for one second into his eyes, making him blush, and gasp, and stammer. And then she crossed her hands devoutly before her, and cast down her eyes, showing her lashes, which were her strong feature, to great advantage. Tom thought he never had seen such lashes; they were so long, and brilliant, and dark. The dark colouring was on her eyelids even, where it appeared in little black spots. He found out afterwards how they came there, and that camel-hair brushes are

used for other purposes than oil-painting. But at present he thought that nature had excelled herself in fashioning such a pair of eyes. They dazzled him with their brilliancy—a brilliancy, too, that could be renewed, for which purpose Constance had at that moment in her pocket two lumps of white sugar and a small bottle of sal volatile, and Goody Brown's cottage was close by, where she could take her drops. And then she murmured in a low voice from between two rosy lips—so rosy and cherry-like indeed were they that they even imparted some of their colour to the cambric handkerchief with which she wiped them—

"'O, sweet! what endless pleasure lies
In thy dear lips—and in thine eyes
Like boundless ocean.'

"Oh, it's heavenly! I never read anything half so beautiful, Tom. I may call you Tom when we are alone, you know. You said I might."

"Oh, do," Tom replies. "Always call me Tom."

"Well, Tom, I declare when I think of those beautiful verses I always cry," she continued, as she carried her handkerchief part way towards her eyes. But probably fearing her lashes might fade if brought into contact with it, and possibly fade in spots, which would be worse still, for then they would be piebald, she replaced it in her pocket.

"I—I think myself they are good, and that I am perhaps a bit of a poet," the young donkey said. "But they never seemed half so good to my

mind before. You repeat them so well. You seem to feel what I intended they should convey. Would it be too much if I asked you to let me hear you repeat the whole poem?"

"Too much, Tom?" she replied, again placing her hand on his arm. "Not too much if I felt myself able to do it. It would indeed be a slight return for your kindness in sending them. But I dare not. My feelings overpower me when I read them. They are so affecting, and it would look so very strange to see me crying."

Tom ceased to press her to recite his verses. He was not going to harrow up her soul. She had fine feelings like himself. In fact, it was grateful incense to him to think his efforts were so grand and successful. How well it was he did not know the truth! What a shock it would have been to his self-love and vanity—for like the rest of mankind he had his share—had he known that the sweet girl beside him was humbugging him, and that although she had attempted to commit his verses to memory as her mamma had advised her to do, she had forgotten them all but the three lines she had repeated, and could not have remembered another word, let her try ever so hard.

"And how did you enjoy yourself in London?" she inquires presently. "Weren't you delighted with the Park and the Row? And don't the ladies ride beautifully, and didn't you admire them?"

Tom told her all about his visit, or at least that part of it in which neither Sam nor Marion were concerned. He informed her where he had been and what he had seen. He quite concurred in her

opinion that the ladies rode beautifully, and that many of them were beautiful. "But beauty is not confined to London," he says. "We have lovely women in the country who need fear no comparison with any in town. I know one lady who is, in my opinion, as immeasurably above any I saw there, as, as——"

"As whom?" Constance asks, demurely. "Do you mean Mr. Bogey's sister? I'm sure you must mean her. She is the beauty of this neighbourhood, you know."

"No, it isn't Miss Bogey," Tom replies. "I can't say I admire her. It's somebody else. Somebody you know. Oh, Con——"

"Take your arm away, Tom!" Constance says, hurriedly. "How provoking! here's that Mr. Bogey himself coming."

It was provoking. Just as she had risen her fish, and felt she had hooked him, and perhaps would in another few minutes have basketed him too, she had to loose him and appear unconcerned. She felt very much like a poacher, or like a man who goes salmon-fishing without a license, when the keeper comes to him. Mr. Bogey was coming along the pathway towards them, unconscious of the hatred he had excited in one breast at least. Had he at that moment been tried for his life with the young lady for the jury, Bogey would have been hung. She would have brought him in guilty without the slightest hesitation or remorse.

"How de do!" Mr. Bogey says. "Hope you're well, Miss Revell? Been up to the house, Seedly. They said you had gone fishing, so I thought I

should find you in this direction. Hope I aren't in the way! Don't like to spoil sport, you know."

Constance said she was quite well, and asked after his sister, feeling at the same time she would like to cut his throat. Tom told him he wasn't in the way at all; that there was no sport that morning, owing to a variety of causes.

"Oh! all right, old feller!" Mr. Bogey said. "Have a weed. Miss Revell don't mind. She's used to smoking. I've smoked lots of times in her drawing-room, haven't I, Miss Revell? Saw you have a pull at a cigar myself once. Lighted it, you know, for that tall feller who used to come down to the parson's."

"I really don't remember anything of the kind," Constance says. "You must be mistaken, Mr. Bogey. It must have been some one else."

"Certainly. Now I come to think, it was. No great harm done, Miss Revell, even if you had. I'm sure 'twas some one else though," Mr. Bogey replied. "But I say, Seedly, we want you, you know. Going to get up a ball at Barchester during the autumn races. Great fun. Everybody will be there. We want you to be one of the stewards."

"Can't you get some one else?" Tom inquires. "I've come so recently into the neighbourhood that I shouldn't care to push myself forward. A new man, you know, Bogey! You recollect what you said at the farmers' ordinary some time ago?"

"Come, I say, none of that! Let bygones be bygones," Mr. Bogey replied, looking rather foolish. "I said some dashed nonsense one day after I'd

taken a glass or two of wine, and Seedly is reminding me of it. Not handsome of him, is it?"

"But you know you meant it, Bogey?" Tom said, with a laugh.

"No, 'pon my honour. You are one of us now, old feller, and as such I'll stand by you," Mr. Bogey replied. "Your uncle everybody says is tremendous well off, and you'll have it all some day you know, so you *are* one of us."

"When is the ball to be?" Constance asks. "I hope it's an invitation ball. Unless it is, there are sure to be such a strange lot of people at it."

"Oh, of course," Mr. Bogey replies. "We—that is me and Seedly and a few other county men—will see to all that, you know, and *you* are sure of being invited. You'll have your name down, won't you, old feller?"

"I'll think about it," Tom said. "By the way, what are a steward's duties."

"None at all. Only got to talk to the people, you know, and guarantee the expenses," Mr. Bogey replies. "I'll tell them it's all right. But here's your house, Miss Revell. I s'pose you'll be coming back now, Seedly?"

"You must see mamma!" Constance says, appealing to Tom. "You haven't called for ever so long. Won't you come in? Mr. Bogey, you'll come in too, I hope."

Mr. Bogey would step in if Mr. Seedly did. He wanted to talk over the ball with him, and he would be able to do so on their way back to The Moat. So both gentlemen accompanied Constance into The Cottage, where they found mamma deep in fashion-

able conversation with the Baroness. Tom was introduced to the Baroness with a great flourish of trumpets. "Baroness," the old woman said, with a wave of her hand to Tom, "this is Mr. Seedly, a very particular friend of ours, and who will be one of the leading men of the county in time. Mr. Thomas, this is my very old friend, the Baroness d'Armfulle, one of the old noblesse."

"Glad to see you, I'm sure," the Baroness said, without rising from the couch, which she pretty well filled, and nodding her double chin at him. "I've heard of your uncle, but didn't know you was his nephew before. You was brought up in Australiar, I think?"

"Mr. Seedly has spent most of his time abroad, Baroness," mamma says, interrupting her. "But now we hope he'll settle down among us."

Mamma then took Tom to the window, and spoke rapturously of his poetry. She told him dear Constance had cried over it until she was quite a sight. That she herself had wept over it in the solitude of her own chamber, and that she was sure he was very clever.

"I think I am a poet," he stammered. "I feel that I have the divine afflatus."

"I'm certain you have," she said. Then turning to the Baroness, who was deep in conversation with Mr. Bogey about the coming ball, she continued, "Baroness, have you seen Mr. Seedly's poems? He writes the most beautiful poetry in the world. Quite equal to Byron, or Mill, or Cobden, I'm sure. I was just telling him he has the gift of the divine afflatulence."

"I hope you'll cultivate it, Mr. Seedly," the Baroness replied. "The divine—af—af— what's-his-name, is a very fine thing. I knowed a young gentleman as had it very highly, and the consequence was he became a colonel in no time. You cultivate it, Mr. Seedly, and you'll get on."

"Of course you'll come to our ball, Baroness?" Mr. Bogey said. "Couldn't get on without you!"

"I don't know. I shall see!" the Baroness replies, winking her little black eyes on him.

"There'll be lots of claret, and ices, and all that sort of thing," Mr. Bogey says.

"And champagne, I hope?" said the Baroness.

"Oceans!" Mr. Bogey replies.

"Then you may send me tickets. I wouldn't give a brass farthing to go to a ball if there was no champagne," the Baroness said. "Indeed," she added, laughing, "I shouldn't mind if I had some now. I'm feeling pretty peckish."

"I'm so glad. We'll have lunch in at once," mamma said, smiling on the Baroness. Then turning to Tom, who was sitting by her side, she added in an undertone, "The Baroness is of a very high family indeed, but she's a monstrous eater, and as to her drinking, I always wonder where she puts it."

Presently the servant announced that luncheon was ready, and the lads rose to take their leave. Mamma pressed them to remain, and Constance appealed to Tom with her eyes; but as he knew Bogey would stick to him until he left, and there would be no chance of a tête-à-tête with his charmer, he pressed that young lady's hand in his, receiving

a warm pressure in return, and left them, the Baroness being in the act of unfastening her bonnet strings and her brooch, so that she might fall to work in greater comfort.

"I'm glad you didn't stop," Mr. Bogey informed Tom, when they had passed through the gate into the road. "I should have had to stay too, and I can't stand scraggy mutton and last week's potatoes warmed up. It's much better feeding up at your place, and if you like we'll get away there now."

"I shall be very glad if you will," Tom replied. "But can you tell who the Baroness d'Armfulle is? It may be treason, but I don't quite fancy she is a lady, you know."

Mr. Bogey winked. "I don't know about treason," he replied. "There are very few about here who would blow you up if they had heard you. She passes muster among a certain set, and really she's uncommon good-natured, and a rare doer."

"Is she a Frenchwoman?" Tom asked.

"Hanged if I know! She says she is, and I'll swear her English is bad enough for anything," Mr. Bogey says. "There was a feller shooting one season at Colburn's, who said she had been a cook to a feller who called himself the Baron d'Armfulle. But all them foreigners are barons and markisses. Any way, she married the foreigner, and when he died she got all his tin. Not much, I expect, but enough to keep her going on."

"She doesn't appear to be a highly educated woman, does she?" Tom says.

"I should say not. P'raps I'm no judge, for I'm not clever at poetry and that there," Mr.

Bogey replies. "But I'm sharp enough to know when a person makes awful mistakes, you know. And I say, it strikes me old mother Revell puts her foot in it sometimes too. No offence, Seedly. I s'pose I oughtn't to speak of her like that before you."

"Don't see why you shouldn't," Tom replies, sucking hard at his pipe. "Mrs. Revell is no more to me than she is to you."

"Oh! all right, old chap. Only I didn't know, you know," Mr. Bogey says. "I heard her make a devil of a hash of one word this morning. She said you had the divine afflatulence. I know that was wrong. It's afflatus, for I've heard my brother, the member and baronet, and head of our family, you know, say that word heaps of times. He always brings it in, in any of his speeches at the agricultural societies. In fact, he's very fond of them big words, and that one being a regular pet of his, I twigged it in a minute."

"What a sharp fellow you are, Bogey!" Tom remarked sarcastically. "One must really mind what they say before you. You pick one up in a moment."

"You're chaffing, old feller. It's no use chaffing me, for I don't mind it a bit," that good-tempered, but rather thick-skulled young gentleman remarks. "I never put myself up for being clever. That's more in my brother's line, the baronet, you know. I don't say I know the meaning of all them hard words, but I can tell when they are pronounced correctly. I don't know what that word the old woman made use of this morning means, but I knew

she didn't say it right. Lots of fellers who aren't clever wish they were, but I don't. My brother the baronet thinks he's clever, and the consequence is he's always catching it from somebody. And to hear him swear sometimes when he reads the papers where they've been taking him off is the best fun going. He thinks he's so uncommon knowing that he's always wagging his jaw in Parliament. And then doesn't he catch it. No, thank you, my boy, *I* don't want to be clever. At least, that way, and making poetry and speeches, and all the rest of it. I'd rather play a safe game of billiards or spot the winner in a race any day."

"Well, I wouldn't worry myself about it if I were you," Tom said, laughing at the ingenuous youth by his side. "I don't think you are in any danger of the papers pitching into you on account of your ability, and if your brother is such a great gun, why, you must console yourself with the thought that he carried off all the cleverness of the family. All the Bogeys can't be Solomons, you know."

"Of course not," Mr. Bogey replied with the utmost gravity. "We can't expect it, can we? I'm only a second son, and it's quite right that Bill should have most brains. But I can do him over a horse any day. I sold him my old mare Becky for a seven year old, and she has lost her mark any time these last six years. Good that, wasn't it? And I can give him twenty-five in a hundred, and beat him at billiards. And then he's so precious soft and conceited—all clever chaps are conceited—I don't mean you, you know, you're well enough in your way—that I can persuade him to play an

even game, and kid him on to back his own cue, by just telling him he's a crack player."

"'Pon my word, Bogey, you are positively dangerous," Tom said. "I shall never be certain whether you are humbugging or not. It must be an expensive game to play at billiards with you, and I begin to doubt whether you showed your best form the other day when we had on the gloves."

"That was on the square, old feller. It's very seldom men will disguise their play at *that* game. You beat me fair, for you hit harder, and are a deuced sight quicker in your returns than I am," Mr. Bogey replied. "But I'll tell you what I'll do," he continued with animation, and a laudable desire to oblige his friend, "I'll play you next market day on the table at the Duke's Arms, and give you five-and-twenty in a hundred, and bet you evens I win. Or I'll take five to four I'll beat you on our table at home, and give you three hundred in a thousand. There now! Or I'll lay you twenty pounds to fifteen my bull-terrier, Vic, will kill a hundred rats in less time than your fox-terrier, Sam. Or I'll——"

"Can't afford to take any of your offers, Bogey. You know I can't play billiards, and that Sam is old and has lost his front teeth," Tom said, laughing. "But I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll bet you an even sovereign I thrash you with the hard gloves, and throw you two falls out of three, Cornish style."

"Thankee, old feller, I'd rather not. But I'll tell you what I wish you would do," Mr. Bogey said.

"What is it?" Tom inquired.

"I wish you would get on that bay mare of yours and try her with my brown horse by Skeffington.

I've brought him over, and he's in the loose box at your place now," Mr. Bogey replied. "We could give them a spin up the side of that big meadow of yours, through the gap in the fence and round the next field, returning through the gate, and finish where we start from. Twice round will be about a mile and a quarter. It won't do them any harm, for your governor always keeps his nags in condition all through the summer, and a sweat would do her good. He never had her out with the hounds but once, and that was the season before last. She'll be rising seven now, and I fancy she can gallop a bit."

"But what's the object in having a trial now? Can't you wait until the season commences?" Tom inquired. "You will be able to see her gallop often enough then."

"Don't you know there's to be an open hunters' race, three miles on the flat, at Barchester?" Mr. Bogey replied. "I know what most of the nags about here can do, and that I've got a horse that can beat them. I'm not so certain about yours. Your man was telling our groom that that bay mare of yours is a regular flyer. If she can beat mine at even weights she must win, for she would receive the sex allowance. Don't you see?"

"But I never heard of the race until now," Tom replied, "and I never raced a horse in my life. I don't know that I would enter the mare."

"Just as you like about that, old feller, though your old governor is as fond of a bit of fun between the flags as anybody," Mr. Bogey said. "I only want to know who's got the best horse, and you can't refuse a feller a trial, you know."

"I'll ask my uncle," Tom replied. "If he's agreeable, so am I. So come in and have some lunch, and we'll see about it."

Mr. Seedly had finished answering his letters when the two young men returned, and they put the question to him, whether the mare should have a gallop with Mr. Bogey's brown horse by Skeffington.

"A sort of private trial, I suppose," the little man said to Mr. Bogey.

Mr. Bogey replied that it was, and that he was induced to make the request through a praiseworthy and natural disinclination to back the wrong horse. "I'm going to enter the Curate—my horse is the Curate," he said, "and he will win or be thereabout, if yours can't beat him. I don't want to drop my money over him, and I put it to you, Mr. Seedly, as a county man, as I put it to your nephew as a county man, whether we hadn't better give 'em a spin at even weights, and see which is best on their merits. And if we county men don't stand by each other, who should, you know."

Now Mr. Seedly was not above the reach of a little flattery, judiciously applied, and it has been before intimated that his ambition was to see Tom a county man, even if he could not be one himself. But here was a county man, the brother of a baronet and a member of parliament, acknowledging both of them as members of that exclusive society which represents the landed interest of the country. He immediately thought of writing to Mr. Culleton to send him the coat of arms and crest of his family, and to trace the pedigree of the Seedlys, which would look very well framed and glazed, hanging

over the dining-room mantelpiece. His crest, when Mr. Culleton should send him one, he would have engraved on his plate, painted on the panels of his dogcart, and stamped on his note paper. He could get portraits of a dozen Seedlys, ancestors of his, from Wardour Street, and he saw himself in the future riding to the Assizes in the same carriage with the judges, and the coachman on the box resplendent in the Seedly livery. He voted against Mr. Bogey's brother at the last election, but, "hang it all," he thought, "county men *should* stand by one another, and I'll plump for him at the next election if there should be a contest. I only wonder how I ever could have voted for a lot of Radical beggars who have no stake in the country." So he patted Mr. Bogey's shoulder, to which he was just able to reach, and with a smile, said to that young gentleman, "Certainly, my dear young friend! I'm quite of your opinion. There's no doubt but that if we county men always stood by each other, things in—in—everywhere, in fact, would be all the better for it. We'll have the mare saddled, and she shall give your horse a trial directly after lunch." We may here remark that so pleased was the little man with Mr. Bogey's gentlemanly deportment and insinuating manners, that though he had often thought him a confounded young ass, and had even expressed himself in public to that effect, had that young gentleman asked him for the loan of twenty pounds, he would have produced his cheque-book at once like a county man and a brother, and written him a cheque for the amount.

"We'll get into the scales directly, Seedly," Mr

Bogey said, when luncheon was over. "We must adjust the weights, you know, and as I'm a few pounds heavier than you, I expect, I've brought the weights over with me."

"But I never rode a race," Tom replied. "We must put up one of the lads."

"No, you mustn't do that," Mr. Bogey said, with horror expressed on his face. "The trial must be private, you know. Nobody must know the weights or anything about it but ourselves, must they, Mr. Seedly?"

"Certainly not," the little man replied. "There can't be too few witnesses to a private trial."

So the bay mare and the Curate were brought round and taken to the big meadow, which was about a quarter of a mile from the house, and Mr. Bogey mounted his horse, and Tom mounted the mare. Mr. Seedly was to start them. "Now Tom," the little man said, "you can't be expected to ride a race, you know, so just you sit still on her, and when you come into the straight for the last time, let her come away if she can."

The bay mare had it all her own way from the start. She hung at the girths of the Curate, without even extending herself, even when Mr. Bogey in the last round put his horse at his best pace. When they turned the last corner of the big meadow and came into the straight, and Tom eased the steady pull he had kept on the bit, she came away from the Curate as if he had been standing still.

"Will that do, Bogey?" Mr. Seedly asked, when they were walking the horses back to the stable.

"I should think so!" he replied. "Of course

you'll enter her. She's bound to win, and the gold cup wouldn't look bad on your sideboard."

"I never thought of racing her!" the little man said. "I gave her to Tom for a hunter, and it's almost a pity to race a hunter: it makes 'em so confoundedly hot for riding to hounds."

"But you must, you know, Mr. Seedly," Mr. Bogey replied. "It would be a shame if you didn't. We county men have dooties as well as privileges, you know. I've heard my brother the baronet say that scores of times, and one of our dooties is to keep a good nag or two that can win a steeple-chase, or a race over the flat, or else how is the breed of horses to be kept up? Really as a county man you ought to run her."

The little man smiled and looked happy. "I'll see about it," he said. "And Bogey, my boy, you'll stay and dine with us, and we'll have as good a bottle of port afterwards as ever you tasted. And we'll talk it over."

Mr. Bogey, who was always willing to dine with a friend, if that friend kept a good table, and "the whack," as that young gentleman termed the wine, was of good quality and unlimited in quantity, assented. And they did talk over the coming race, speaking in fact of little else, and the result was that Mr. Seedly pledged himself to enter the mare, and Mr. Bogey on his part pledged himself to introduce him to a gentleman highly qualified as a gentleman jockey, who should steer her to victory.

When he rose to depart, he requested in a rather thick voice the favour of Tom's company as far as the gate.

"Now, old feller!" he observed, when they had arrived at the end of the drive, "it's all plain sailing. Nobody knows anything of your mare, so that she will start at long odds. The Curate here will be about favourite, for he's performed in public before. We'll lay against my nag and back yours to the very shirts on our backs, and if we don't skin the lamb, I'm dashed."

"You're a deep one, aren't you, Bogey?" Tom said, laughing.

"I *am* down to a move or two, though I aren't clever," Mr. Bogey replied, wagging his head knowingly. "Well, good night, Seedly, and mum's the word."

"Good night, and mum it is!" Tom replied, dropping into the old way of speaking.

Mr. Bogey hesitated. He had one foot in the stirrup, and his hand was on the pommel of the saddle. He coughed, and then withdrawing his foot, he took Tom by the button of his coat, and said, "I'm rather short of tin, Seedly. Quite a temporary embarrassment, you know. Would you mind lending me your name for three months?"

"I'll have nothing to do with a bill, if that's what you mean," Tom replied.

Mr. Bogey mused for a moment, then again taking hold of Tom's button, he said, "You couldn't lend me thirty pound, old feller, could you?"

"I might do that," Tom replied.

"I knew you were a good feller, old feller," Mr. Bogey said joyously, and seizing Tom's hand which he squeezed with great warmth. "You haven't got it about you, perhaps."

"No, I haven't," Tom replied. "I daresay I can get the money to-morrow, though."

"Then I'll ride over for it to-morrow morning, old feller," Mr. Bogey promised—a promise, too, which he religiously kept. "Good night, old chap. I'm a county man, and you're a county man, and as such, why, hang it, we'll stand by each other."

When Tom returned to have his pipe with his uncle, the little man was loud in Bogey's praises. "He was so well-mannered and so affable, and quite recognised our position, Tom. Not that I care about it myself," he said, as he sipped his whisky-and-water. "But I like to see you stand well with the county people. Bogey seems a very well-informed young fellow."

"I'm afraid we shall find it rather expensive being county men," Tom said. "He asked me to lend him thirty pounds."

"I hope you lent it him!" the little man exclaimed.

"I've promised to let him have it to-morrow, but I find I haven't got enough!" Tom replied.

"Never mind, Tom! I'll pay the shot," the little man said. "We are not hard up for a few pounds yet, thank God. Why, what's thirty pound; it's nothing, Tom. Had it been his brother, the baronet, I would have lent him three hundred if he wanted it, for if county men won't stand by each other, who should? Though, mind you, I wouldn't do it too often," he continued, "and, p'raps, thirty pound is quite enough to lend to our young friend, for he isn't very good pay—but I'd stand that sum any day to see you a county man."

CHAPTER XV.

Mr. Seedly's entrance into county society was soon an accomplished fact. There were not many county people in the neighbourhood, it is true, and the few there were, with the exception of Sir Thomas Oldacre, were not of very ancient date. Indeed, it may be said that the odour of the warehouse, the shop, and the foundry still clung to most of them, and that it would take at least another generation to get rid of it. But they called themselves county people, and those who had lately retired from business believed them. Mr. Bogey, after receiving pecuniary assistance from Tom—temporary, it is true, as he informed his friend, and only for ten days at the most—spread reports of Mr. Seedly's wealth, and the snug income Tom would one day come into. He induced his mamma, Lady Bogey, very much against her will—her prejudices being all against trade, for it will be remembered her respected papa had been a builder of coaches and dogcarts—to call at The Moat, and graciously leave her card, and after sufficient time had elapsed to soothe her feelings, for she quite dreaded contact with people of that class, Mr. Seedly and Tom were invited to Buckland House. But this was after the

reports of their wealth had been circulated and believed, and Lady Bogey had three grown-up daughters who were marriageable, but whose portions were so very small as not to be worth mentioning. Under these circumstances, her ladyship thought an arrangement between the two families might be convenient. "My daughters would bring family and blood, while the other people brought money." It may not be out of place here to remark that these speculations did not originally occur to her ladyship. In fact, it is a question whether anything original ever did cross her brain; and there were some people who declared she was excessively dull, not to say stupid. But these persons were, as a rule, not invited to the scraggy dinners at her ladyship's country house; had they been, it is possible they might have thought her brilliant and charming.

It is a duty we owe to Mr. Bogey to state at once that it was his astute mind which first conceived the desirability of mating one of his sisters—it didn't matter which—with "old Seedly's nephew." The thought occurred to him when he was riding home with Tom's thirty pounds in his pocket. He had hinted to that young gentleman his perfect willingness to make it fifty, or a hundred if he liked. Or he would go double or quits for the amount, having, in fact, at that moment a spurious half-crown in his pocket with two heads which would come in nicely for the purpose. But Tom was not inclined to increase the loan, for various reasons unnecessary to mention, but which, no doubt, the reader will perfectly understand. And so Mr. Bogey rode homewards, speculating how Tom could be made into a banker from

whom he could draw occasional supplies. A man who could lend you thirty pounds at a minute's notice was not to be ignored. That he had unlimited resources he could not doubt; and the only consideration was, how *he* might arrange matters so as to reap some advantage from those resources. Bogey did not think himself mean or dishonest, and if you had hinted he was a sponger, the chances are his very thick blood would have begun to simmer with a gentle heat, and you would have had reason to wear a green shade over one of your eyes, if not over both, for some time. He thought it perfectly fair to sell a friend when he sold a horse, to disguise his play over a game of billiards until such time as he could get a safe bet on, and to toss you to any amount with that peculiar half-crown, which was a relic of his school-days. Indeed that coin had been as good as an annuity to him. But his luck was on the wane, for other young men of his acquaintance were becoming possessed of coins with two heads or two tails as their fancy prompted—in fact, to use his own remarkable words, they were becoming fly to the game. He regarded himself as simply unfortunate; he had been born a second son, and had but a second son's fortune. Even this he could not touch until her ladyship should leave the county people of this world to become an ornament to select society in another, for wherever that other world was—a point which, like a great many other people, she was sadly at a loss to decide—she had no doubt whatever but that she would move in the most select society that world should afford. And it is the opinion of the present

writer that so great a distaste had her ladyship to any other than county society, that she would cut her own papa should she happen to meet him *there*, and would positively refuse to remain if she were relegated to any other circle than the most fashionable. This is saying a good deal, for we know that all fashionable people, and county people, and, in fact, the big guns who are the salt of the earth, always go to Heaven. Indeed, the *other place* is never mentioned in polite society.

So in thinking on his own misfortunes and the luck of other people on his way home that day, a most brilliant idea occurred to Mr. Bogey. "The old woman," he said, meaning her ladyship his mother, "is a very good life, and bar apoplexy from over-feeding, she's good for another ten or fifteen year, and had it not been for my own natural ability in raising the wind, hanged if I know what I'd do. I might even have to earn my living. But here's this Seedly with no end of money—the fellow I'm sure must be as rich as Blazes, or whatever the feller who had all that money was called—or he wouldn't be so precious willing to lend thirty pound. And I didn't even give him an acknowledgment for it. But that's no matter. He's just as likely to get it without an I O U as with one." In which opinion everyone who had the honour of an intimacy with Mr. Bogey, would have fully concurred.

"But," he continued, addressing his brown horse by Skeffington, "why shouldn't the old woman ask him over and make him take one of the girls. There's Becky, and Patience, and Charity are each in want of a feller. He could have either one of

them, I daresay, if he asked 'em, though Becky is blue, and Patience has a devil of a temper and a wart on her nose, and Charity has about the worst tongue ever I heard. But that's his look-out; I ain't going to marry either of them. 'Twould be a deuced good dodge to get him to take one, and if the law allowed it, he might have all three for anything I'd say to the contrary. And then," continued Mr. Bogey, with animation, "I could borrow a few pounds from him whenever I was hard up. A fellow can't refuse a little temporary assistance to his own brother-in-law. By Jove, I'll put the old woman up to it the minute I get home."

So Mr. Seedly and Tom made their appearance at Buckland House, and were invited to the grand dinners, on which occasions there was a great display of electro-plate, even if there were little else, and if Mr. Gilbey was in business at that time, you may be sure his wines were poured out for the guests in sparing quantities by the groom and gardener, whose Berlin wool gloves were mended, and who wore an old dress coat of the late baronet's, in the character of butler. It is possible the little man and Tom might have felt pleased and gratified at all this. If there was little to eat at these feasts, sure there was an abundant display of the Bogey crest. If Mr. Gilbey provided the wines, weren't there other county people at the table poisoning themselves too? And if Mr. Bogey pressed them to have a quiet game of billiards and smoke a cigar before they went, hadn't they had the honour of listening to Sir William make one of his little speeches,

and didn't that honourable member, while holding Mr. Seedly by his buttons, say "we county men," thereby implying that his auditor was a county man, no less than five times? If we say that both the little man and Tom failed to see that the dinners were sham, the wine sham, the conversation, what there was of it, sham, and the politeness sham, we should be doing them an injustice, for they both liked good dinners, and good wine, and agreeable talk, neither of which was in much demand at Buckland House. But then we know what Mr. Seedly's little weakness was, and we also know—or the experience of our lives cannot have been very great—that people are ruled more through their weaknesses and little vices than through their virtues or understanding; that we can get more out of our friends by appealing to their appetites, their foibles, their ambitions, than to their reason; that there is more to be done with a man through his heart than through his head—that is, with those who have hearts and heads. But it doesn't at all follow that all our acquaintances have.

"You see, Tom, we must give and take, if we wish to get on in this world," Mr. Seedly said. "I wish to see you occupy a certain position in society, which you can't very well do unless these people take you up. If they do this, they receive something in exchange, though who has the better of the arrangement, I don't profess to say. It suits both parties, I've no doubt. We'll dine with them, and praise the cuisine and the wine, though I'd advise you to take as little of either as possible, for it will be more agreeable to those who provide the

feast, and you'll feel all the better for your abstinence next morning. We can listen to her ladyship talk of the London world, and of fashionable life which she never sees, of Drawing-rooms and levées which she has never attended, and sink her respected papa, and never once allude to the very excellent and workmanlike dogcart he once made for me. We can affect to believe all Sir William tells us of Prime Ministers, and of his being consulted by the heads of departments, without hinting that we consider him a prosy humbug; and as to Mr. Bogey, we can put up with his amiable little stories of private life, and occasionally lend, or rather make him a present of a pound or two."

If Mr. Seedly thought that there was nothing else expected from them in exchange for the civilities of Buckland House, he was mistaken. Tom was to be provided for with one of the girls, and the little man himself might have had another if he were so inclined. Mr. Bogey was very often riding over to The Moat, and whenever he came over, he invariably remained to lunch, and to dinner, if asked, and smoked Mr. Seedly's cigars and drank his claret, or when claret was not to be had, his beer, with praiseworthy assiduity. He offered to put them on the safest things in all the great races, as well as those of minor importance, even expressing his friendship for them so far as to offer to invest their money for them himself, at the most alarmingly long odds, which could not fail to make their fortunes, although he himself did not appear to have bettered his condition by them, or in any way to have become more flourishing in a pecuniary point

of view. And then he usually was the bearer of some message from one of the girls. It was "Tom, or, Tom, old feller, Becky sent over this volume of poems, and wants your opinion of 'em, you know;" or "Patience wants you to write words to this 'ere music which she wrote, and says you must come over and sing it with her. It's a dooet, you know, and you're a regular swell at dooets." Or else it would be "Tom, old boy, Charity wants you to go over and see her picture of your bay mare, which she has painted from memory, and tell her whether her fox terrier pup which you gave her must have his tail bit or cut off. A regular stunner is Chary —just your cut, old feller."

As it was Mr. Seedly's desire that Tom should cultivate this acquaintance, the lad was at Buckland House a great deal oftener than Mrs. Revell or her daughter liked. Becky, Patience, and Charity pressed him into their service as much as possible, and he had to sing, read, and ride with them. There was a perfect and sisterly understanding among these young creatures that neither should spoil the game of the other—that whichever Tom should show a preference for should not be interfered with in any way, but should receive the assistance of her sisters in all things pertaining to marriage. It was a triple alliance, the contracting parties binding themselves together to aid and abet either of them against the whole world in general, and Miss Revell in particular.

It was no secret at Buckland House that Tom was a frequent visitor at The Cottage, and they had divined perfectly the wishes and intentions of the

ladies who resided there. There were many little stories about them—as, indeed, who is there of whom stories have not been told?—and these were poured into Tom's ear, probably with many additions and not a little malice. They told him her age, and of her previous campaigns—that she quarrelled habitually with her mamma, and that she smoked on the quiet. But he did not believe them. He set his face dead against all scandal, as far as *she* was concerned, and assured himself that she was as young and innocent as she was beautiful. He contrasted her bright eyes and long dark lashes with Becky's spectacles; her pretty nose and pearly teeth, of which Mr. King the dentist had provided one front one, with the warty feature that ornamented the centre of Patience's face, and her masticators, which were irregular and discoloured; Charity's forward speech and fast manner with *her* modest and maidenly deportment. Who can wonder that she came out of the examination unscathed, or that he vowed she was the handsomest as well as the best girl he had ever met; or that, after a morning's visit to Buckland House, he should gallop off to The Cottage, where he would lie at full length on the sofa, smoke his everlasting pipe, and repeat all the girls had told him, while the old woman raved and stormed in her bedroom at his nasty bachelor habits, which Constance had promised to break him of. You may be sure that he became perfectly conversant at this time with the history of the Bogey girls, and indeed of all the family, for when ladies throw down the gauntlet, though otherwise the mildest and most inoffensive creatures, they become the most relentless

and bitter warriors the world has ever seen, dissimulating their implacable hatred and desire of revenge under the most friendly and affectionate exterior, or how was it that when Constance met the Misses Bogey they kissed each other, walked with their arms round each other's waists, called each other dear and darling, and parted with expressions of mutual regret? While they abused each other to the lad, each did all they could to make *their* home the more attractive to him. Constance showed the utmost enthusiasm about the bay mare and her gallops, and did so hope she would win the coming race. She entered with great interest into his accounts of fishing, and even read up the "Complete Angler," thereby astonishing him with her knowledge of the gentle art. Mamma aided her daughter in every way. She knitted mittens for him which he never wore, and vowed she liked the smell of tobacco, although she would have liked to have broken his pipe over his head. At Buckland House similar interest was taken in all his pursuits, though in that splendid mansion smoking was not permitted. If he felt inclined for a pipe or a cigar, he had to smoke it sitting on a corn-bin in the stables, where Mr. Bogey would accompany him, that accomplished youth being more at his ease there than in her ladyship's drawing-room. When Sir William came down for the partridge shooting—for not a feather was allowed to be touched until he came—Mr. Seedly and Tom were invited to bring their guns, and probably listen to a long and profound dissertation on the game laws and the rating act. He was left alone with the girls, the youngest of whom was not more

than four years older than Mr. Bogey, in a manner that would have shocked our Continental neighbours, or if her ladyship was in the room with them, she generally covered her aristocratic features with a cambric pocket-handkerchief, beneath whose graceful folds she calmly slept, very much after the manner of her deceased papa, the respected coachbuilder. When the races at Barchester were spoken of, they begged him to ride himself. They would make his silk jacket if he would ride. "What were his colours? They would wear his colours on that day." Blue jacket and scarlet cap would look beautiful, and they gave him a commission there and then to purchase for them on the next market-day about five pounds' worth of ribbons and other articles of feminine adornment in those colours, without having the remotest intention of paying him for them. Constance was interested in this race too. She hoped he would win; but unlike the Bogey girls, she begged him, with a gentle tremor in her voice, not to ride; she would be unhappy if he rode; not but what he was a most accomplished horseman—everyone knew he was that. But there would be danger, and if anything should happen! Oh! And she hid her face behind her handkerchief, and tried to look pale.

This was very pleasant to the lad. *She* took a tender interest in him and was concerned for his personal safety. She would be unhappy if he were in danger. Perhaps in the privacy of her chamber she had wept at the thought, making those beautiful eyes look red and swollen, which now seemed lustrous and unfathomable. "No," he assured her, pressing her

hand, "he wouldn't ride.' He wasn't going to make an exhibition of himself in a harlequin's jacket. She might comfort herself, for he was in perfect safety," a statement by the way of which there may be more than one opinion. But if Tom would not ride, Mr. Bogey had promised to find a gentleman who would. A week or so before the race, Captain Roper came over to ride the mare in her gallops, and on the morning of the race everybody knew she was a flyer. The grand stand was full of fashionable people, and the ring of betting men, for the meeting was a popular one. Tom and Mr. Seedly were both there, in new white hats and light overcoats, with their race-glasses slung over their shoulders, looking very healthy and very happy. Neither of them betted. They went in simply for the fun of the thing. If they won, they would be the better off to the tune of a gold cup, and if they lost, they would be no worse off than before. The mare's trial had got about in racing circles, and no business was done with the bookmakers until the parade past the stand. Mr. Seedly's bay mare was then made the favourite, to that gentleman's great delight, while odds of seven to one were freely offered against Mr. Bogey's brown horse by Skeffington. That gentleman rode himself, and on their way to the post had a confidential conversation with Captain Roper.

"I think we shall do the trick this time, Roper," he said.

"We shall, if your horse is as good as you say he is," the gallant captain replied. "But are you certain? Because if you are not, I shall ride to win.

Seedly has laid me twenty pounds to a shilling against her."

"I'm certain I can win if you don't," Mr. Bogey said. "I've backed my horse for every penny I've got, and laid against yours for more than I'm worth, and you stand in, old feller. Our commissioner is taking and laying the odds this minute for every penny he can, and you *must* lose. It's two hundred pound in your way, my boy, if you do, and you can't pick that up every day."

"Very well," the captain replied. "If the mare can do it, I *must* come in first, but the course is awkward enough to puzzle anybody."

Evidently Captain Roper's answer was perfectly satisfactory to Mr. Bogey, for that gentleman winked knowingly, put his tongue in his cheek, and trotted off to the starting-post.

The distance was a little over twice round the course. There were nine starters, all of them ridden by gentlemen jockeys. Captain Roper was the only one who rode habitually. Indeed, that gentleman was quite as much a professional as any jockey on the turf, and few could give him the usual allowance and beat him. The mere fact of his riding the mare sent her up in the betting. The Bogeys' carriage was on the course, and Tom and Mr. Seedly joined the girls. It is unnecessary to say that Constance was not there; had she been it is probable the Misses Bogey would have had to address their observations to some other cavalier. Presently there was a roar, "They are off!" Round the bend they came in a brilliant cluster of red, purple, blue, and yellow, and rushed past the stand in close

order, which they kept up until they had passed it the second time. Then there was some tailing off; one would rush to the front, to give place directly after to another, and so on until they came to the bend of the course leading into the straight. "Seedly's mare wins! The Curate wins! Seedly's mare! The Curate!" roared a thousand voices. When they came into the straight the mare was leading. "Seedly's mare for a hundred," shouted Cornet Greenawn. "By Gad, she's pulling double." "I'll take you," said Braddon, the bookmaker, shutting up his glass, through which he had been watching the race, with a click, such as Napoleon is popularly supposed to have done at the battle of Waterloo. Then turning with a fierce swing, he shouted in stentorian tones, "I'll lay again' Seedly's mare! Three to one again' Seedly's mare, in thousands if you like," and booked bets as fast as his pencil would travel, though not fast enough for the backers, who almost quarrelled who should first hand over their money to the layer of odds. Two hundred yards from the winning-post, Captain Roper, on the mare, quietly left the other horses and cantered in an easy winner by a length; Mr. Bogey, doing all he knew, and using his whip-arm like a flail, was second by a head, and Mr. Beavan's Ploughboy was third. Captain Roper was conducted back to the weighing-room in triumph, and Tom was slapped on the shoulder by innumerable dirty hands. The win was a popular one, for the favourite won, and the public always cheer when they have won their money. But presently an ominous whisper was heard, that made backers look pale. Then the

winning numbers were hoisted on the telegraph board, the Curate first. An objection had been entered against Mr. Seedly's mare on the score of having gone on the wrong side of the post, and Captain Roper himself acknowledging the fact, the objection was allowed.

"Awfully sorry, old feller!" Mr. Bogey said to Tom. "I hope you didn't back your mare! I've dropped a lot of money over her."

"It can't be helped, I suppose," Tom replied, "but I think Captain Roper must be an ass to have made such a mistake."

Mr. Bogey made no reply to this, but went off to find the commissioner who had been operating for him in the ring. But if he said nothing, it is probable he thought all the more, and if you could have got him to tell you what those thoughts were, the chances are he would have said that the bay mare's jockey was more rogue than fool.

Had the mare fairly lost the race, neither Mr. Seedly nor Tom would have felt any disappointment. But when the race was hers from the start, they did think it rather hard to have the crown of victory snatched from them. But if the day brought disappointment, the night would obliterate it. There was the ball to come off, and Constance would be there, and had promised Tom as many dances as he chose to ask for. Mr. Seedly said he should not remain for it. He was too old to go in for heavy dissipation, and he would see the mare home safe; but Tom would remain. The Bogey girls did all they could to get him to cavalier them, but the lad backed out. He was already engaged; he would

have been very happy, had he known, etc., etc., and so Mr. Bogey had to do duty, much to his dissatisfaction, for that young gentleman had promised to meet Captain Roper and a few congenial spirits to while away the hours at three-card loo, unlimited, a game at which he was particularly skilful. Indeed, his luck at that game and others with cards was proverbial, and when he dealt he was almost certain to have a good hand of trumps.

The ball-room was full, the county paper said, of fashion and beauty. The Lord Lieutenant and his family were there, and all the squires for twenty miles round. A considerable number of young fellows stood about the door, buttoning and unbuttoning their white kid gloves, assuring each other it was going to be a capital ball and no mistake. The stewards, with bits of white satin ribbon in their buttonholes, were going about finding partners for this one and that one, and performing the offices of a master of ceremonies. It cannot be said that Tom was a good steward. He only watched and waited on one person. He thought *she* never had looked so lovely.

A considerable amount of art and no little experience had been called in to aid Constance in her equipment. Like an Indian warrior, she had put on her war paint, determined, at all risks, to take one scalp that night. Her eyes were brighter than usual, and her colour, which has been hinted to have been rather high, was toned down to a peach-like bloom, which the Bogey girls instantly recognised as the effect of violet powder. They wished to embrace her, and would have pressed their lips on her cheek,

had she not declined. Constance was too old to allow any such sign of friendship to pass between them. They might have taken a patch of the bloom off, like a peach with finger-marks on it. Her glances were killing, her eyelashes bewitching. Never had they looked finer. Indeed, it would have been a disappointment to her had it been otherwise, and her recent purchase of belladonna would have been to no purpose. When she entered the room, hanging on Tom's arm, many scores of eyes were turned on them, and it was whispered in male circles that "Miss Revell was meant" to-night. It was no wonder they attracted a good deal of attention, for, as has been already stated, Constance had improved nature by art, and the lad was as fine and handsome a young fellow as was in the room.

Then the music struck up, and the sets were being formed for a quadrille. "Would she dance with him?" "Of course she would, stupid boy. Wasn't she always ready to dance with him?" and Tom was in heaven. Never before had he seen such a glorious scene. The brilliant lights, the sparkling eyes, and beautiful toilets, the scores of handsome women, flashed and danced before him until he was almost bewildered. It was his first ball, and he must be excused if he became slightly excited. He was no dancer. He could, under proper guidance, walk through a quadrille, and would not make more mistakes than his neighbours in the lancers. But a round dance—a waltz, or a gallop—he had never attempted. "Did she like the round dances?" "Yes, she adored them. She was so sorry he did not waltz, but she would save the other dances for him

and he must take her in to supper," which you may be sure he did. If she was so fond of waltzing, he could not be so selfish as to keep her from dancing them when she was asked, and he sat and watched her and her partners, whose heads he would like to have punched, whirl round the room at the rate of an express train. When the dance which preceded the supper was over, he rushed to where she was for the purpose of escorting her. Her partner, a small, weak-kneed youth, who was much taken with her charms, was inclined to resent this interference with what he thought his rights. But when he saw Tom's flushed face and big limbs, he thought better of it, and resigned her to his care with much politeness. I regret to state that at supper the lad lost his appetite, which was a very bad sign. But if he eat nothing, he more than made up for it by drinking a good deal. He had never been intemperate; indeed, on the contrary, he was, as a rule, most abstemious. The only wonder, then, was how the deuce he managed to carry the quantity of champagne he drank without becoming intoxicated. Had many an old toper there present taken as much, he would probably have wanted to fight his neighbour, or sing a sentimental song, just as his nature prompted. Tom only grew hilarious. The wine loosened his tongue, and he talked in such a brilliant manner that, had it occurred in London, he would never, for the rest of his natural life, have had any necessity to dine at home. The end of the table at which he sat was in a roar one moment, and respectful silence the next. Soon the attention of everyone present was fixed on him. "What's going on down below,

there?" Lord Fillyoaks inquired of his friend, Sir Thomas Oldacre. "Gad!" Sir Thomas replied, "It's young Seedly. I've been listening to him for some time. He's drunk enough wine to make half-a-dozen men tipsy, and I've not heard such wit or such brilliant talk for thirty years. There is but one man in every ten thousand whom wine, and plenty of it, makes glorious and fascinating, and that fellow is one." "By Jove! then let's get him to make a speech," his lordship said. And immediately rising, he proposed, in a few well-chosen words, the health of the stewards, coupling with the toast the name of his young friend, Mr. Seedly.

The lad rose, and slightly bent over the table. There were about three hundred pairs of eyes fixed on him. Never had a speaker such respectful attention. The elderly gentlemen ceased to talk, and the younger ones to joke; and even the old women forgot to feed, which I humbly submit is a most remarkable instance of the fascination of youth and manly beauty on hearts that had long since ceased to beat for any other cause than losing two trebles and the rub for sixpenny points. The lad's face was never pretty; but it was pre-eminently manly, and had that determined look so characteristic of his uncle, Mr. Bob Eversley, which in itself has a most peculiar charm. His grey eyes were bright, even brighter than those of Constance, who sat by his side, for hers had begun to fade (the effects of sal volatile and eau-de-cologne will not last for ever, you know), and they danced and sparkled on all present, as he poured out such a flood of wit,

humour, and pathos as is seldom heard. "By heaven!" his lordship said, when the lad had sat down amid a thunder of applause, "I never heard anything like it. Where the deuce did he learn it all? Whose side is he, Oldacre?"

"He never learnt that," Sir Thomas replied. "The fellow is an orator—not an ordinary stumper—but such an orator as Heaven only makes one at a time. And he is a Conservative if we take him up."

"Thank God!" said his lordship, devoutly. "When he is a bit older, we must have him in the House. By Gad! wouldn't he touch the Rads up. They are at it again down there."

"Do you see the champagne the boy is drinking?" Sir Thomas says. "They'll make him drunk, if they pour it in on him like this. Hark! he's going to sing."

The fact was, the Misses Bogey, who were at the table, mentioned to some of their neighbours that Tom was a beautiful singer, and soon it was whispered all round the table, and through the door to those who were standing in the lobbies. "Would he oblige them with a song? Only one. Indeed, he must sing them just one!" Everyone, old, young, or middle-aged, is more or less susceptible to flattery. Now no flattery is so sweet to a young fellow as to see men who are considerably his seniors, and ladies who are not, listen to his words with attention and pleasure. Tom was flattered. He felt that night he was a better man than any there: that he talked better, had a more playful fancy, choicer language, and a sweeter voice. Indeed, that voice was a peculiarity of his dead mother's family. All

the Eversleys had glorious voices. The consequence was, that when they called on the servants to fill Mr. Seedly's glass with champagne, Mr. Seedly emptied it, and when they called on him for a song, he sang it. Now, by one of those peculiar flights to which the mind of man is prone, even in the midst of the wildest excitement, Tom's fancy, at this moment, carried him away to Hulme Terrace, and he saw himself and Sam sitting by the fireside with Mr. Maggs and his wife, and the thought crossed his mind like a flash, "What would they say if they saw me here?" The next moment he had begun, in a voice like an angel, that glorious old ballad, "Home, sweet Home." When he had ceased, there was a dead silence in the room. No one even broke that silence with applause, which is the sweetest applause.

"Oldacre, let's get out of this, and set 'em dancing again," his lordship whispered. "That boy will charm the hearts of all the women in the room, and I have three girls here myself."

So his lordship rose, and the other big-wigs rose, and the smaller wigs followed their example. And the dancing again commenced, and the writer states, on the very best authority, that had Tom then proposed to any one woman in that room, or to all of them in turn for that matter, he would have been accepted. But there was only one woman in the world to him. Though he had charmed three hundred with his wit, his voice, his beauty, he was but the merest child in the hands of his charmer. Young Samson's head was reposing in the lap of Delilah, and before the night was over

not one of his locks would remain, but his poll would be as bare as yours or mine, or any other ordinary mortal's.

Everyone had left the supper-room but Tom and Constance. He took her hand in his, and said, "I have been longing all the evening to tell you how charming you are to-night."

"It is you who are charming," she replied, turning away her head to hide her blushes, or perhaps the absence of them. "I never heard anyone speak like you, and you have the loveliest voice in the world."

"If it is lovely to you, I am happy," he said. "Constance, dear Constance, will you let me sing to you always? Will you give me the right to always drive care away from you? Will you give me this little hand—pretty little hand"—and he smoothed and patted her six-and-three-quarter glove—"never more to take it from me? Constance, my darling, I love you dearly. Will you—will you——"

Her head was hid in bashful confusion in her pocket-handkerchief. Her red lips, though not so red now as they had been two hours before, for she had enjoyed her supper and perhaps had unconsciously licked them, murmured "Yes!" her six-and-three-quarter glove remained clasped in his hand. Happy Tom! Lucky fellow! Fortunate youth! In return for your manly and noble heart, that priceless jewel which might, perhaps, have been taken to a better market, you have won a little battered, pinchbeck article, which has been let out, and put in pawn, and ticketed for sale any time these last fifteen

years. But mind what you are about. Don't kiss her. You will rub off the violet powder. Don't look into her eyes. The late hour has made them look fishy. Don't examine her eyebrows. The pencil tracing has faded and been smudged, and there's the waiter watching you. Perhaps he has seen all your little performance, and heard all your pretty nothings. "Soda, sir! Yes, sir!" he says, with the utmost gravity to Tom's demand for that beverage. He looked solemn while Tom drank it, and that youth departed from the room under the impression that that waiter had not seen him press Constance's —his Constance's hand—had not heard him propose to her. Had he, however, seen him five minutes afterwards lying amidst his empty bottles, laughing wildly, and "dashing his eyes if ever he see sich a go!" it is possible he might have entertained some doubts on the subject.

The ball was now nothing to him. He was intensely happy. It was no use waiting there any longer. He longed to go to his hotel and think on his happiness over a cigar. He took her, in the one-horse chaise he had ordered for the occasion, to her friend's house with whom she was stopping. In the darkness he kissed her at parting. And then he went to his bedroom and smoked pipe after pipe, until the sun had just begun to tinge the horizon, and then he went to bed, to wake however soon after, and to find his clothes brushed and hanging over a chair in the room, and a letter from Mr. Seedly. He broke the seal at once. It said—

"My dear boy—I found the enclosed on my

return, and sent it off at once, as it is marked *immediate*. I hope you enjoyed yourself.

"Ever your uncle,

"SILAS."

The letter enclosed was from Sam, and was dated Liverpool, where he and Marion had successfully made their debût about two months previously. And as it was headed "urgent and particular," we may as well read it too. It was as follows:—

"MY DEAR TOM,—You come over at once. There's a fellow here who is after Marion, and she can't stand him at no price. He comes after her all the same though, and I'm going to beat him within an inch of his life, and I want you to see fair play. Bring a big stick with you, for this Liverpool is a devil of a place. Come next train. I shall be at the railway-station all day until you come.

"Yours, &c., &c.,

"SAM."

Tom dressed himself in five minutes, paid his bill at the hotel, wrote a note to Constance, in which he assured her of his undying love, and that nothing would have kept him from her but the most urgent business, and then went home by the first train, where, being provided with money to pay his expenses by his uncle, he packed his portmanteau, selected a big stick according to Sam's advice, and started for Liverpool by the afternoon's mail.

CHAPTER XVI.

In the library of one of those pretty villas with which the neighbourhood of Liverpool abounds, Mr. Parkes, merchant and shipowner, was seated, in conversation with an old acquaintance of the reader's—Captain Jack Waters. The former was a portly man of about fifty years of age, and of the medium height. There was nothing remarkable in his appearance calculated to draw attention. He was a man whom you would meet and pass in the street without making any mental observation whatever respecting him, or if you did, it would merely be to the effect that he seemed well-to-do in the world, and was probably a professing member of some religious society, for he *had* a rather sanctimonious look about him, suggestive of orphan homes, lying-in-hospitals, and societies for the propagation of the gospel. Captain Waters we need not again describe. With the exception of the jewellery, which had disappeared, he was pretty much the same in appearance as when Tom had the pleasure of his society as far as Peterborough. A decanter of brandy stood on the table, and two glasses, one of which Captain Waters carried to his lips pretty frequently. "Now, Waters," Mr. Parkes said, "I request you

will pay particular attention to what I am about to say. You needn't spare the brandy; there is plenty more in the house!"

Captain Jack took the hint, and requested his employer to "heave a-head."

"I'm afraid you bungled that last affair, Waters," Mr. Parkes observed.

The Captain replied hoarsely that "he was 'et-ceteraed' if he did."

"Had you a man on board called Gabriel Somers?" inquired Mr. Parkes.

"Yes!" replied the other, glancing over his shoulder. "There was a hand as shipped under that name. But he's sailed *his* last v'yge."

"I'm not certain about that," Mr. Parkes remarked. "Read that letter." And he passed across the table a dirty half-sheet of note paper, on which was written, in very imperfect characters—

"SIR,—I was in the *Joseph and Mary* when she went down. I see it done, and am fly to the whole game. I stand in with you and the Captain, or I'll peach and blow you all up. I'll be at your house to-morrow night at ten o'clock.

"GABRIEL SOMERS."

Captain Jack pored over this epistle for some time, as though he could not understand it. At last he crushed it in his heavy hand, which he brought down with a bang on the table, and said between his clenched teeth, "Bl—— him!"

"Waters!" said Mr. Parkes, holding up his hands with the palms turned towards his companion, "Don't swear; I dislike an oath. As a man and a

Christian"—but checking himself, and remembering to whom he was talking, he continued—"it's no use bl—ing him now. You should have seen to that at the time. It is evident the fellow saw you *do what you did.*"

"There wasn't a soul near when I got the cabin floor up, and did *you know what,*" the Captain replied.

"I'm of a different opinion. If it were so, this man could know nothing," Mr. Parkes said. "He will be here presently, and you can sit in the window there—the curtains will hide you—and hear all he says. And now, is the schooner ready to sail?"

"We can weigh anchor at a minute's notice," the Captain answered.

"Then you will do so to-night. I shall not remain in England another day. It is absolutely necessary that I should leave at once. Affairs have been going badly of late."

"You ought to be rich enough, governor! You've drawed over a hundred thousand from the underwriters this last ten year!" says the Captain.

"But I've lost more than twice that sum in speculations. I must start instantly, or the consequences may be fatal. And if this fellow *does* know as much as his letter implies, I should say *your* neck will stand a pretty good chance of being stretched. I have my doubts whether we have acted wisely. It may be that we have not earned our money as honestly as we might wish, and that what comes over the devil's back, goes under his ——"

"Come, stow that, mate," the Captain says; "don't try to come your moral dodge with me. Out

with it, what you've got to say, like a man, as is a man."

Mr. Parkes coughed, and perhaps would have blushed had he been able. He had been in the habit of talking in a highly moral and religious strain for many years, and he felt rather a shock when his companion pulled him up. Perhaps he had even talked himself into believing that he was a high-souled British merchant during all these years, and was a little annoyed at finding the Captain set him down in the same category as himself. Whatever were his reflections, however, as a man of business he came to the point at once.

"I accept your rebuke, Waters," he said. "You wish me to speak plainly; well, I will do so. It is necessary I should leave this country within twenty-four hours, for certain reasons I need not mention. I will be on board by midnight, and will bring the girl with me. I'll manage the whole of that. If you have, or if you should *fancy* you have anything to settle with the writer of this letter, you can follow him when he leaves here. What I wish you to do is, to have the schooner ready for sailing as soon as I come on board. Your papers are made out for America, but our destination I will tell you when we are in blue water. That can be easily managed, and by painting a white band round her, and giving her a new name, no one will know the clipper schooner *Maria*."

A servant at this moment tapped at the door, and informed Mr. Parkes that a seafaring man was in the hall waiting to see him.

"Take him into the dining-room, and summon

the other servants. I'll read prayers there to-night," her master said. Then closing the door, and turning to his companion, he continued, "I shall return with this man in ten minutes. In the meantime, place yourself behind those curtains, and you will be able to see him, and hear what he has to say, as well as though you remained where you are."

A tall, dark-complexioned man, with grizzled hair, and keen, fiery black eyes, who might have been any age you choose between forty and sixty, stood just inside the dining-room door, dangling his hat in his hand. He was dressed in sailor's slops, wore earrings in his ears, and had a scar extending from his eyebrow to his jaw.

"My good man," Mr. Parkes said, when he entered the room, with his hands softly joined at the tips of his fingers, just as if he were going to take a header, "your name, I believe, is Gabriel Somers?"

"Yes," Gabriel replied, looking intently on the calm countenance before him.

"Then, Gabriel Somers, I received your note. But first of all we will do our duty to our Maker by reading prayers, and then we can speak of earthly things afterwards," Mr. Parkes piously observed. "Will you join us?"

Gabriel muttered something about praying not being much in his line, and remained standing, while the master of the house read through the evening's service in an unctuous voice.

When he had closed his book, and the servants had risen from their knees and left the room, Mr. Parkes requested his visitor to follow him, and led him to the library. Here he seated himself as much

in the shade as possible, placing Gabriel, however, so that the light might fall full on him, and afford Captain Jack behind the curtains a good view of his face. When he had arranged this to his satisfaction, he said, "Now, my good man, I have this note of yours in my hand. Do you know what it is? It amounts to a conspiracy to extort money. There's a policeman round the corner; shall I call him?"

"Call him if you like!" replied the man, with a fierce glance. "Do you want all your plans blown upon? your little game with the lass at the theatre spoiled? Do you want to swing, master? Then call him in. Or say but two words, and I'll do it myself."

Mr. Parkes turned pale and writhed beneath Gabriel's fierce eyes. He poured out half a glass of neat brandy and drank it. "What do you know? what do you want? Speak man!" he said in a voice almost as husky as Captain Jack's.

"This is what I know," he said. "I saw the skipper on board the *Joseph and Mary* scuttle the ship. I know it was by your orders, master. If you deny it, let him answer to the law for losing your property. Bah! don't try it on with me. I know more than this. Shall I tell it you? No! Then I'll tell you what I want: I want a thousand pound down or you'll not put foot on the deck of the *Maria*. Do my terms suit you, master? It's a thousand pound down, or you lie in goal."

Mr. Parkes mused long and deeply. He saw no escape unless he acceded to Gabriel's demands. The delay even of a few hours would be ruin to him. At length he said, "My good man, I'm not inclined to

dispute with you; not that your evidence would be worth anything, but I have plans which will not bear to be put off. But you ask a large sum. I have not the amount in the house. I will, however, give you a cheque on my banker for it."

"Give me the gold, or I'll set the law-hounds on you in an hour," Gabriel replied.

"Impossible! Even if I had it you could not carry it," Mr. Parkes urged.

"What would a thousand pounds weigh?" asked Gabriel.

"Oh! a devil of a weight; you had better take a cheque," Mr. Parkes answered.

At this moment there was a sound as of a smothered laugh. Perhaps Captain Jack thought of his employer's rebuke when *he* bl—ed the man. Gabriel's eye turned in a moment towards the window.

"It's nothing. Some one in the road. We hear everything quite plainly here," Mr. Parkes said.

"Then give me notes. Bank of England notes, master, do you hear?" Gabriel said. "They don't weigh heavy."

Mr. Parkes opened his desk with a sigh, and took from it a bundle of bank notes. There were a great many similar bundles there which would soon be stowed away on board the Maria. "Here!" he said, huskily, "take them. They are all right. Take them and begone."

Gabriel took the bundle and carefully counted them. "Twenty fifties! That's right, master," he replied. "Good night, and may you have just such another voyage as you've sent many a poor fellow on."

"Good night," said Mr. Parkes, and raising his closed fist and shaking it at the door, he added, "and may the devil's curse light on you."

For one moment he hesitated. He turned, and Captain Jack was beside him. He was pale as ashes now, and in pouring out a glass of brandy he spilled half of it. "Here, man, drink this," he said, hoarsely. "Run—follow him—do what you like, but bring off the notes. Do you hear? Do WHAT YOU LIKE!"

"Do I hear? I do. Will this settle accounts, mate?" he replied, producing a murderous weapon, commonly known as a life *preserver*. "I think it will. Another glass—and then——"

* * * * * * *

Gabriel was turning the corner of a street in the neighbourhood of the docks. A dark figure lurched against him, and a blow fell on his head with a dull thud. He cried out, "Oh, Lord! I'm sped," and fell like a log. A hand was thrust into his breast, and the notes taken from his deadened grasp. The weapon was again lifted for another blow, but there was the sound of hurrying feet, and the murderer lurched round the corner and into a dark alley. He had the gait of a seaman.

END OF VOL. II.

J. OGDEN AND CO., PRINTERS, 172, ST. JOHN STREET, LONDON, E.C.

USEFUL WORKS.

1. **TAKE MY ADVICE**; A Book for Every Home, giving complete and Trustworthy Information on everything pertaining to Daily Life. Crown 8vo, cloth, Illustrated, price 2*s.* 6*d.*, 360 pp.

Contents—Household Management—Domestic Cookery—Brewing and Distilling—Domestic Medicine—Domestic Chemistry—Clothing Garden Management—Law of Agreements, Leases, I O U's, Bills of Exchange, &c.—Trade, Artistic, and Scientific Facts—Etiquette and Manners — In-door and Out-door Games—Domestic Pets—Domestic Pests — Ladies Work—Something for Everybody—and other matters. By the late Editor of the Family Friend.

*** *This is one of the most complete books of the kind ever offered to the Public, and published at an unusually low price.*

2. **THE BOOK OF DATES**; or, Treasury of Universal Reference, comprising the principal Events in All Ages, from the Earliest Records to the Present Time. With Index of Events and Numerous Tables of Permanent Interest to the Student. Demy 8vo, cloth, price 10*s.* 6*d.*, more than 800 pages of closely printed matter.

3. **A COMPLETE PRACTICAL GUIDE TO HER MAJESTY'S CIVIL SERVICE**; containing in full the Examination Papers for every Department used since the Appointment of the Commissioners; Full Details of the Limits of Age and Qualifications of Candidates; Hints to Candidates for every Office; and Copious Tables of the Emoluments and Superannuation Allowances of every Civil Servant in Great Britain, Ireland, India, and the Colonies. By a Certificated Candidate, an Officer of Her Majesty's Civil Service. Crown 8vo, cloth, 2*s.* 6*d.*

4. **THE MANSE GARDEN**; or, Plain Instructions in the Pleasant Culture of Fruit Trees, Flowers, Vegetables, and Sweet Herbs, for the Beauty and Profit of the Villa or Farm. By NATHANIEL PATERSON, D.D. Fifteenth Thousand. Crown 8vo, cloth, 2*s.*

This is a complete and practical guide for gardening in all departments. It is divided into three parts, viz., Forest and Fruit Trees, Vegetables and Sweet Herbs, and Flowers, on all of which such instructions are given as can be easily carried out. This work also contains a *select* list of trees and flowers, a list of hardy, half hardy, and tender annuals, biennials, perennials, alphabetical list of particular flowers, monthly summary of gardening work in season, &c. &c.

5. **READINGS FOR YOUNG MEN, MERCHANTS, AND MEN OF BUSINESS**, containing numerous Maxims, Truisms, and Articles on Probity and the Management of Business on Sound and Honourable Principles. Crown 8vo, cloth, 1*s.* 6*d.*

6. **CŒLEBS IN SEARCH OF A COOK**; with Divers Receipts and other Delectable Things relating to the Gastronomic Art. Crown 8vo, cloth, 2*s.*

Contents.—In Search of a Cook—On the Principle and Practice of Eating and Drinking—Income and Expenditure—Station in Life—Choice of Company—Conduct during Dinner—Breakfasts—Luncheons and Suppers, and Bills of Fare and Receipts for Fifty-three Different Dinners, &c.

7. **GESENIUS' HEBREW GRAMMAR.** Translated without Abridgment, by T. J. CONANT, Professor of Hebrew in the Literary and Theological Institution at Hamilton, New York, with a Course of Exercises and a Hebrew Chrestomathy, by the Translator. A New Edition. Royal 8vo, cloth, 5*s.*

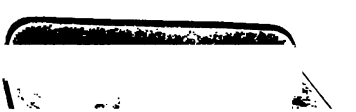
8. **THE BROAD LINE DRAWING-BOOK.** for the use of Young Beginners, containing nearly One Hundred Drawings of Objects. Sixth Thousand. Cloth, 2*s.* 6*d.*

Ditto, ditto, in Five Parts, each complete and sold separately, with covers printed in gold, 6*d.* each.

9. **BLACKWOOD'S SHILLING ATLAS**; containing 13 Maps, corrected up to the Present Time. Coloured. Copious Index and handsome Wrapper printed in Colours, royal 4to, making it the most elegant and complete Atlas ever issued at the price. 1*s.*

10. **BLACKWOOD'S HAND ATLAS**; containing 12 Maps, Coloured. Royal 8vo, 1*s.*

11. **THE TEMPLES OF THE HEBREWS**: Their Courts, Sanctuaries, Furniture, and Festivals. An Epitome of the Laws, Literature, Religion, and Sacred Antiquities of the Jewish Nation. By the Rev. T. BANNISTER, LL.D. Crown 8vo, 7*s.* 6*d.*

12. **THE INFALLIBLE READY-RECKONER.** With Complete Interest Tables, and much Useful Information. By W. COXHEAD. 18mo, cloth, 1*s.*

13. **THINGS YOU OUGHT TO KNOW CLEARLY EXPLAINED**, &c. Crown 8vo, cloth, 2*s.* 6*d.* This work contains a vast amount of reliable information of a practical character, necessary to all engaged in mercantile pursuits, or, indeed, to all who mix in society; with a copious Index of Reference, by which any subject sought for may be easily found.